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**Mediated encounters in diasporic space:
exploring processes of transculturation syncretism and
identity redefinition in the Ghanaian diaspora in London.**

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MEDIATED ENCOUNTERS IN DIASPORIC SPACE:
EXPLORING PROCESSES OF TRANSCULTURATION
SYNCRETISM AND IDENTITY REDEFINITION IN THE
GHANAIAN DIASPORA IN LONDON

NII ANANG ADJETEY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the diasporic experiences of Ghanaians in London and assesses how Ghanaian identity is redefined and constructed in new contexts. The mediated experience dimension of this exploration considers the difference that the diverse menu of cultural resources offered by television is making to dispositions, cultural proclivities, and patterns of identification across intergenerational differences among Ghanaian-Londoners. The study qualitatively assembles and analyses empirical data from primary sources and integrates material from secondary sources to draw its conclusions.

The thesis traces the development of the black diaspora as the historical antecedent or precursor to more recent black diasporic formations. The concept of the black diaspora provides a context for understanding or imagining the fledgling Ghanaian diaspora as another offshoot within the family of black identities in Britain. It is argued that the perceptions of blackness that Ghanaian-Londoners encountered in Britain were derived from the racial construction of blackness as the antithesis of whiteness and hence its construction as deviance. This was purveyed in discourses and reinforced in the public imagination through the media. Not only did it run counter to their self-perceptions, it impinged on their experiences as black people as they were confronted with unflattering stereotypes which they repudiated. In marginal spaces they endeavoured to reinstitute traditions from the homeland and to establish a distinctive presence in the ensemble of black identities in Britain, which in part challenges the monolithic imaginations of blackness from 'othering' perspectives, and also highlights an area of blackness underrepresented in academic discourses.

Furthermore, the study finds that in their cultural consumption, a factor of their diasporic experience, they exhibited a critical edge and a comparative attitude to screen representations, reflecting the dual and sometimes multiple perspectives of their diasporic condition which enabled them to critique or valorise certain cultural practices from the different worlds of their experience, an indication of processes of cultural negotiation, synthesis, and hybridisation.

Overall, this thesis contributes to current academic debates around mediated experience and cultural transformations, and the understanding of processes at the intersections between modernity, diaspora and culture in the era of globalization.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.0: Introduction:

The centripetal dynamics of globalisation continue to draw economies and cultures into a web of interconnections and flows with increasing intensity and with implications for peoples and their identities. Diasporic phenomena epitomize such developments and enhance their visibility. This study engages with contemporary research interest in diasporas and the implications of television appropriation for diasporic cultural identities. Drawing on the experiences of Ghanaians in London as a modern diasporic community, the study explores some of the consequences and implications of the logics driving change and transformation and how these may be observed or discerned in ordinary consumption activities.

The concept of ‘*encounters*’ employed as a caption for this project encapsulates the experience and engagements of Ghanaians with difference and newness through travel, relocation and mediation. Such encounters are shown to engender *transculturation* which connotes the merging and converging of cultures. ‘*Syncretism*’ is also a reminder of the shifts and changes that defy the indefensible notions of cultural purity, and enables the conceptualisation of culture as dynamic and processual, with perpetual hybridisation as its principle. The biological term ‘*osmosis*’ used later on in the thesis is meant to convey the idea of gradual seepage, transfusion, and transmission between cultures.

While the study focuses on the microcosmic world of the Ghanaian community in London, the logics and collective assemblages involved are macro or global in dimension. It is therefore a consideration of the local impacts and manifestations of global forces and processes, and locates the study in the wider context of geo-political, economic, and relational configurations delineated in terms such as the ‘West’, ‘North’ and ‘South’.¹ The considerations therefore include hegemonic relationships, economic logics, global flows, diasporic formations, and issues of identity.

¹ See glossary of terms and abbreviations in Appendix ‘B’

1.1: Rationale

Post-colonial black diasporas of West African origins are underrepresented in discourses and literature on black diasporas, overshadowed by popular preoccupation with the Trans-Atlantic or 'Black Atlantic' formations.¹ Highlighting features of the Ghanaian community in London as a typical modern diasporic formation of West African origins, contributes towards redressing the imbalance in representations and perspectives on black cultures in Britain². It also contributes to the understanding of the significance of mediated experience and current academic debates around global cultural transformations.

1.2: Aims and objectives:

- To construct a representative portrait of the Ghanaian diaspora in London
- To explore issues around Ghanaian-Londoners' sense of identity.
- To investigate the cultural implications of television reception among Ghanaians in London; how television, a medium for recreation and information, also mediates cultural experience and knowledge, and engenders negotiations.
- To assess the impact of simultaneous experience ('experiencing together') through television on Ghanaian identity
- To assess the significance and impact of knowledge and information gained through television (particularly news broadcasts), on Ghanaian-Londoners' understanding of the world and their place in it.
- To explore the social uses of television, including the implications of conversations about television in social interaction and the sharing of interpretations of television.

1.3: Research questions:

- What are the defining features of the Ghanaian diasporic community in London
- How do Ghanaian-Londoners perceive and articulate their sense of identity.

¹ It is acknowledged that less attention has been paid to the experiences of certain migrant groups (Vertovec, 2006a; Whitewell, 2002; Castles 2003; Berkely, Khan and Ambikaipaker, 2006). However, as Vertovec recognises, the recent growth of the previously less established groups has dramatically altered the social landscape of Britain, and it is crucial to attend to their experiences (Vertovec, 2006a).

² According to 2001 census figures, the number of black Africans in London (378,933) has now surpassed black Caribbeans (343,567)

- What difference is the diverse menu of cultural resources offered by television making to dispositions, cultural proclivities, and patterns of identification across the intergenerational divide
- How is television consumption implicated in the processes of cultural negotiation¹ among Ghanaians in London

1.4: Some working hypotheses

- Tendencies towards global cultural homogenization engendered by globalization (through the intensification of worldwide interconnectedness or flows), are countered by resistance, negotiation and syncretisation, diversified communities rather than insular cultures.
- Diasporas challenge the cultural politics of the nation-state, opening up a space in which resistance and the affirmation of difference points to a more pluralistic conception of nationality and possibly to its transcendence (alluded to by Gilroy, 1993b: 62)
- The media are implicated in the construction or reinforcement of identities ethnic, national and other (Anderson, 1983). The global media are implicated in the formation of modern diasporic identities.
- The lack of representation of minority communities in the mainstream media prompts creative ways of constructing and maintaining their identity in virtual anonymity, utilizing resources available in the media.
- Diasporic communities (as do ethnic minorities), act as essential ‘others’ in the self-imagining of the dominant host cultures, and their presence signals change in a world that is changing them.

1.5: Thesis Outline:

The thesis has the three main requisite structural components - *theoretical*, *methodological* and *empirical* which are developed in chapters. The theoretical basis (concepts and theories, outlined in chapter two) and methodological approach (the research process and procedures, in chapter three), lay the structural foundations for the empirical component (fact-findings, in chapters four to ten). Furthermore, the

¹ Negotiation in this case refers to how they accept, reject, or combine the cultural elements they encounter – (the dynamic behind how migrants come to be like the people they left behind and yet different from them, and how they are never the same as those they now live amongst).

empirical segment is composed of two parts: a description and analysis of the *situational experiences* of the subjects (chapters four to six), and *television-mediated encounters* (chapters seven, eight and nine), and include the main findings for each chapter. The main conclusions are summarised in chapter ten.

Outline of chapters:

- *Chapter one* (this chapter) introduces the thesis and its structure
- *Chapter two* lays the theoretical foundations for the thesis. The discussion engages with concepts around global flows and processes, including the relationships between capitalism, modernity, diasporic formations and cultures. Concomitant with global integrationist processes is the juxtaposing and mixing of cultures, and the inevitable production of hybridity. A fairly in-depth discussion of diasporas provides an understanding of diasporic formations as exemplary evolving communities in the midst of global flows and structures. These serve to underpin the empirical study of the Ghanaian Diaspora in London as an example of how ethnic, national and other identities are redefined and constructed in new contexts, and how subalterns¹ negotiate their identities in the post-modern world.
- The research process is outlined in *chapter three*. As a backdrop, this section briefly considers the pendulum shifts in media audience research from a paradigm that asserted media omnipotence to audience-centred approaches that argued for audience autonomy. The merits in both approaches provide useful conceptual tools and a balance in the understanding and analysis of media (TV) appropriation among the subjects. The chapter further explains how established research methods and concepts were utilised to design the research and to carry out data gathering and analysis. The rationales and considerations for various aspects of the process are also provided.
- *Chapter four* overviews the history of the black (African) diaspora and the development of black consciousness as a context for understanding the diasporic experiences and implications of being Ghanaian & black in Britain. A historical panorama, it assesses the outcomes of the dispersal and consolidation of black

¹ **Subaltern**, used in postcolonial theory, is a term that commonly refers to persons who are socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure.

peoples in other parts of the world, and the consequences of the traumas of the Atlantic slavery on black cultures and identities. It reflects on the influences of black creativity, mined and expressed in the difficult conditions of the Atlantic diaspora, on popular culture as a whole. The diversity of the black diaspora is emphasised against its monolithic imagination by others. This enables the conceptualisation of the Ghanaian diaspora as a dynamic strand within the broader family of mutating black identities. From a critique of the narrow definitions of what constituted black culture in Britain, a case is made for a reconfiguration of black culture in Britain that recognises and incorporates cultural expressions as represented by the Ghanaian presence in Britain.¹

- Identity Matrix is the caption for *chapter five* which explores identity issues involving Ghanaian-Londoners; the overlapping and interrelated identities that being Ghanaian involves, and how they are operationalised in encounters with others in London. Beginning with intra-Ghanaian ethnic identities and how their interrelationships are affected by relocation to the London environment, the discussions extend to interactions and encounters with other black national identities in London. The responses of the subjects to racial discourses and experiences of racism are also highlighted and examined to assess how antipodal and antithetical imagination of blackness impinged on their identity.
- A sketch of the Ghanaian diasporic community in London as a distinctive strand within the macrocosm of the global black diaspora is attempted in *chapter six*. It explores issues of cultural expression, transmission, negotiation and mixing, including traditional and popular cultures as expressed through music, clothing, customs, and rites. The use of pictures in this chapter provides some visual illustrations. Furthermore, the functions of the fledgling media spaces that they have created or adopted are also considered. This includes the uses and significance of television, and the role of televised competitive international sporting events, as showcased by the 2006 football World Cup, in defining national allegiances.

¹ A more comprehensive discussion of Black resistance and cultural movements and their leaders, and other aspects of the history of Black dispersals, a spill-over from this chapter, are provided in Appendix 'C'

- *Chapter seven* assesses the significance of television soaps and sitcoms in socialisation and enculturation processes, and the potential implications of participation in the programmed national viewing culture around soap operas in generating a sense of identification with the host (British) nation, premised on the identity implications inherent in the regular ritual viewing of national programmes. The subjects' viewing of the London-based soap serial, *EastEnders*, is the focus of the analysis, which draws out pertinent issues of cross-cultural importance, and includes critical reflections on representations and social mores. This is supplemented by an exploratory reflection on the appropriation of American sitcoms.
- *Chapter eight*, themed African programmes, engages with issues relating to the provenance of African programmes available to audiences in Britain. The proliferation of African drama on niche satellite TV channels and in video format, thanks to the emergence and prominence of the prolific Nigerian Film Industry in particular, meets the demand for African drama from African perspectives. The uses, significance, and implications of the subjects' appropriation of African drama are explored.
- The focus on news issues in *chapter nine* considers the subjects' reflections and responses to events and representations as conveyed via the news - televised news in particular. The chapter evaluates the importance of the news in mediating information useful for such purposes as decision-making, citizenship, facilitating socialisation, promoting environmental responsibility, imagining identities, adopting positions on events, sustaining a diasporic consciousness, connecting the subjects to their homeland and with the rest of the world, and helping them to make sense of the world.
- The key findings emerging from the empirical chapters are summarised in *chapter ten*, with a statement of the significance of the research, an acknowledgement of its limitations, and suggestions for further research. Further information or supplementary data are provided in the appendices.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

(Globalisation, Diaspora, Media, and Identity)

Chapter outline

2.0: Introduction

2.1 Capitalism, globalization and the integration dynamic

2.2: The local/ global (complex) relationship

2.3: Modernity and mediated experience

2.3.1: Mediated experience and personal identity (The Self)

2.4: Diasporas

2.4.1: Embedding in transnational flows

2.4.2: Overview

2.4.3: Diasporas and the nation-state - interrogation and identification

2.4.4: Diasporas and the transnational terrain:

2.4.5: Diasporas & the global electronic cultural space

2.4.6: Diaspora typologies, categories, and evolving definition

2.4.7: Home away from home: Imagination, Ambivalence and Politics

2.4.8: Diasporas and anthropological / postmodernist approaches to culture:

2.5: Issues of hybridism/ syncretism:

2.6: Conclusion:

2.0: Introduction:

The study engages with theoretical concepts around global flows. It explores the intersections between modernity, diaspora and culture in the era of globalization, as well as the underlying economic dynamic in the processes. The virtual omnipotence of transnational capitalism as a centripetal force in global integration and cultural convergence is acknowledged. Economic globalization, intertwined with globalization of communication and media forms are linked with the globalization of culture (Featherstone, 1990; Harvey, 1989). This bedrock facilitates the understanding of the related phenomena of diasporas and cultures, and serves as a basis for the exploration and understanding of the Ghanaian diaspora.

2.1 Capitalism, globalization and the integration dynamic

Globalisation may be understood as the intensification of interaction between peoples, cultures, and institutions; the perception of the world as a single place, albeit, with ambiguities. In Roland Robertson's terms it is 'the concrete structuration of the world as a whole' (1990: 20). Globalization is said to have spatial and temporal dimensions (Harvey 1989; Giddens, 1990), the interplay between them expressed in intensity, depth, speed of flows of goods and information, constant migrations of people, the simultaneous occurrence of events and relations facilitated by communications technologies, and the resulting flow of products and images worldwide.

It is also argued that the processes of globalization are coterminous with modernity (Hall, 1996). The global scene is marked by the multiple cultural determinants of modernity, the main cultural direction of global development, such as capitalism, urbanism, mass communications, individualism, a technical-scientific-rationalist dominant ideology, and the nation-state system. Inherent in these developments are trends towards global cultural homogenisation (Tomlinson, 1991: 27; Morley and Robins, 2000: 70-71), including language hegemonies and clothing styles (Appadurai, 1990). However such trends seem to be intertwined with the emergence of new differences, which include the reassertion of ethnic, religious and local particularity (Brah, 1996: 152; Robins, 1990: 317; Clifford 1988, 1992; Hannerz 1987, 1992; Jacques, 1989: 237, 133). It is suggested that the global mass media and modern fashion and consumption styles play a crucial if paradoxical role in the crystallization of parochial identities (Faurschou 1987; Jameson 1991).

There is also an emergence of diasporic formations ('de-territorialized communities'), usually connected to a permanent homeland and new styles of production of hybrid local identities which undermine the nation state project (Appadurai 1995). Such formations may be linked to dynamics set in motion by European expansion, colonialism and empire-building. Besides, economic disequilibrium in the world system, coupled with communication flow imbalances, which include seductive images of better worlds (real and imagined) away from localities (home places), projected around the globe, are thought to create migratory gravities between regions ('push and pull' factors) (Van Hear, 1998: 2-3; King and Wood, 2001:1; Jackson, 1986: 24; Chambers, 1995:1).

At the heart of the integration dynamic is global capitalism. With early critical insight into the universalizing power of capitalism, which also works to the emancipation from the narrowness and intellectual restraint of all local culture, Marx and Engels refer to old local and national seclusion being replaced by intercourse in every direction, and universal interdependence of nations, which also includes material and intellectual production:

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all ... nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate (Marx and Engels, 1967: 53)

With the collapse of communism, liberal capitalism's domination of the global landscape appears definitive. Its features include the domination of transnational capital, consolidation of global markets, revolution in communication technologies, a new international division of labour, and the development of new techniques of production. It is the system that governs, the context in which the world's system is shaped. Its capacity to intervene and transform, is said to extend beyond the natural environment and to exert an influence on social systems, on interpersonal relations and on the very structure of the individual (personality, the unconscious, biological identity) (Mellucci, 1980).

The globalization of economic activity also means the incorporation of all national cultures into the global capitalist economic system and the emergence of capitalist culture with tendencies towards world cultural homogenisation, involving the manufacture of universal cultural products and the convergence of lifestyle, culture, and behaviour among consumer segments across the world. Ulf Hannerz argues that:

There is now a world culture ... No total homogenization of systems of meaning and expression has occurred ... But the world has become one network of social relationships, and between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as a flow of people and goods' (Hannerz, 1990: 237).

The transnational media corporations, integral to the world economic system are perceived to function to the expansion of this 'global culture'. 'They provide in their imagery and messagery, the beliefs and perspectives that create and reinforce their

audiences' attachments to the way things are in the system overall' (Schiller, 1979: 30). Capitalism may therefore be considered as the main logic behind globalisation.

2.2: The local/ global (complex) relationship:

Anthony Giddens identifies 'time-space distantiation' as a key feature of globalization. This involves the disengagement of experience from place and time (the local setting) and the sharing of such experience in a wider world context, television providing an example. He states:

...the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice-versa. This is a dialectical process because such happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distantiated relations that shaped them. Local transformation is as much a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space (Giddens, 1990: 64)

Globalizing tendencies are seriously challenging localizing tendencies (Basch et al. 1994; Kearney 1995: 548); local traditions, forms of authority, development trajectories and cultural expressions are more and more confronted with global ones. The dominant political, economic and cultural influences of globalization do not impact all contexts uniformly as they interact with diverse local conditions (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991). Particular histories and localities shape cultures differently as local cultures contend with, negotiate with and transform external influences. The format in which people experience and restructure their life world undergoes profound changes in response to worldwide alternative models to their local traditions (Kopytoff 1986, Appadurai 1990).

According to Ang (1996), a dichotomized, binary counterposing of the 'local' and the 'global' usually from conservative perspectives and positions of cultural puritanism and protectionism, associate the 'global' with cultural destruction, and the 'local' as the site of pristine cultural authenticity. But the 'global' and the 'local', far from being two opposing realities, are mutually constitutive and complexly articulated.

Interconnectedness (or connectivity) implies that the local is pervaded by the global sphere of influence. In the various local contexts and conditions, there is active but differential negotiation with the global presence. Local reproduction has the element of the appropriation of global flows of mass-mediated forms and technologies.

Beyond cultural contents the infrastructure of economic, political, ideological and pragmatic conventions and principles provide the governing structural parameters for the organization of media production, distribution and reception (consumption) around the world (Ang, 1996: 153-4). Differing local adaptations, traditions and preferences in the appropriation of such standardized conventions is the reason behind the non-linear nature of cultural globalization.

It is worth recalling Cohen's contention, though from a different context, that mere appropriation of forms is not synonymous with homogenization. He argues that a community might import structural forms, (like religion, politics, or economy) across its boundaries, infuse them with its own meanings, and use them to serve its own symbolic purposes. So similarity in forms does not imply cultural homogeneity. For these forms become vehicles for the expression of indigenous meanings. He challenges the notion that communities will be transformed by the dominant structural logic of their host societies, rendering them more alike, and suggests that this ignores the creativity with which communities work on externally imposed change (Cohen, 1985:37)

Hence the apparent increasing global integration, far from eliminating cultural diversity, rather provides the context for the production of new cultural forms, marked by local specificity, making the global the site of the homogeneous and the local the site of the diverse and distinctive (Ang, 1996: 155). Also arguing against the perception of homogenization, Marcus and Fischer contend that 'the apparent increasing global integration suggests not the elimination of cultural diversity, but rather opportunities for counterposing diverse alternatives that nonetheless share a common world, so that each can be understood better in the other's light' (1986: 136). Diversity hence, is not the outcome of local autonomy, but of ever-evolving reworkings and appropriations: 'expressions of possibilities active in any situation, some accommodating, [and] others resistant to dominant cultural trends or interpretations' (Marcus and Fischer, 1986: 16). Diversity in global culture is also hybrid, syncretic, creolized, and fluid, emanating from constant cultural traffic and interaction rather than from original, rooted and traditional identities (Ang, 1996: 155). Thus 'the global ecumene', it has been pointed out, is about the organization of diversity rather than the replication of uniformity (Hannerz 1992).

2.3: Modernity and mediated experience

Mediated experience has been explained as the involvement of temporally/ spatially distant influences with human sensory experience (Giddens, 1991: 243). Anthony Giddens (1991: 20-21) identifies three key dynamics of modernity relevant to this experience which separate interaction from the particularities of locales: The separation of time and space as the condition for the articulation of social relations across wide spans of *time-space*, up to and including global systems; *disembedding mechanisms*¹; and *institutional reflexivity*.² According to him, the globalising tendencies of modernity are inherent in these influences and their universalising properties, and distinguish modernity from traditional societies, because these mechanisms propel social life away from the hold of established precepts or practices. Globalisation, he postulates, ‘concerns the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations “at distance” with local contextualities (1991: 21). Elsewhere he states:

This is less a phenomenon of estrangement from the local than one of integration with globalized ‘communities’ of shared experience ... We are all familiar with events, with actions, and with the visible appearance of physical settings thousands of miles away from where we happen to live. The coming of electronic media has undoubtedly accentuated these aspects of displacement, since they override presence so instantaneously and at such distance. (Giddens, 1990: 141)

¹ *Disembedding mechanisms* (abstract systems), according to Giddens, consist of symbolic tokens and expert systems. *Symbolic tokens* refer to media of exchange that have standard value and are thus interchangeable across an indefinite variety of contexts. Money, his chosen example, ‘stores information and provides for the enactment of transactions between agents widely separated in time and space’ (1990: 24). *Expert systems* refer to systems of expert knowledge, of any type, depending on rules of procedure transferable from individual to individual. In other words, they are ‘systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organise large areas of the material and social environment in which we live today’ (1990: 27). These include the built environment and the technologies that sustain modern life. Such abstract systems invite trust in expertise of absent others in ‘faceless commitments’ as opposed to ‘facework commitments’ where representatives of such abstract systems and institutions (like a plane’s cabin crew) are present as ‘access points’ to these systems (1990: 85). Inherent in such concepts is an expression of the complex intersections of familiarity and estrangement (intimacy and impersonality) of modern life.

² *Institutional reflexivity* entails the regularised use of knowledge about circumstances of social life as a constitutive element in its organisation and transformation. Modernity’s reflexivity differs from the ‘reflexive monitoring of action intrinsic to all human activity’ in the sense that it is a chronic revision of social activity and material relations with nature, in the light of new information or knowledge. Ironically, the reflexivity of modernity, Giddens points out, actually undermines certainty of knowledge that reason was supposed to provide, because it operates in what he calls methodological doubt. Reason was supposed to overcome the dogmas of tradition with certitude of knowledge. Yet, even well established scientific tenets are open to revision in the light of new ideas or findings, and experts often disagree over practical diagnoses and theories.

Before him Joshua Meyrowitz had noted that:

Traditionally, neighbourhoods, buildings, and rooms have confined people not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically as well. Now ... information is able to flow through walls and rush across great distances. As a result where one is has less to do with what one knows and experiences. Electronic media have altered the significance of time and space for social interaction (Meyrowitz, 1986: viii)

Giddens draws attention to phenomenological and self-identity issues in conditions of late modernity with his insight into such 'disembedding' mechanisms, which facilitate the 'lifting out' of social relations from situated locales and their stretching out and recombination across space and time. Distance intrudes on local activities.

In high modernity, the influence of distant happenings on proximate events, and on intimacies of the self, becomes more and more commonplace. The media, printed and electronic, obviously play a central role in this respect. Mediated experience ... has long influenced both self identity and the basic organisation of social relations. With the development of mass communication, particularly electronic communication, the interpenetration of self-development and social systems, up to and including global systems, becomes ever more pronounced. The 'world' in which we now live is in some profound respects thus quite distinct from that inhabited by human beings in previous periods of history (Giddens, 1991: 4-5)

The world has changed in the sense that, even though everyone still lives a local life (in terms of being situated in time and place), yet local activities are intruded by distance and mediated experience, such that the 'phenomenal world' of the individual and the general universe of social activity within which collective social life is enacted are global (Giddens, 1991: 187). Even at the local level, we live in a wider trans-local world. Locality cannot defend a sequestered existence from the wider world. 'Distant events may even become as familiar, or more so, than proximate influences, and integrated into the frameworks of personal experience' (Giddens, 1991: 189). He further describes the modern as increasingly phantasmagoric, which he explains as the process whereby local characteristics of place are thoroughly invaded by, and reorganised in terms of, distanced social relations - the influences of distant social forces and processes.

This has led to the claim that 'places are no longer the clear supports of our identity' (Morley and Robins, 1995: 87), also expressed by Garcia Canclini as 'the loss of the "natural" relation of culture to geographical and social territories' (1995: 229), a

reference to the assumption that globalization fundamentally transforms the relationship between inhabited places and cultural practices, experiences and identities. Joshua Meyrowitz (1986) points out that the media alter the 'situational geography' of social life: 'More and more, media make us "direct" audiences to performances that happen in other places and give us access to audiences that are not "physically present"'. This means that the mediated social situations construct new communalities.

Perhaps television best portrays this phenomenon. Television's function in articulating globalizing processes and local cultures (introducing distant events to viewers, sometimes with simultaneity between unfolding events and reception), radically alters temporal and spatial arrangements in the world and has the potential for shaping viewers worldview and for transforming viewers' senses of self and community.

Television and electronic media, in general, have greatly decreased the significance of physical presence in the experience of social events ... one can now be an audience to a social performance without being physically present; one can communicate "directly" with others without meeting in the same place. As a result the physical structures that once divided our society into many distinct spatial settings for interaction have been greatly reduced in social significance (Meyrowitz, 1985: vi)

2.3.1: Mediated experience and personal identity (The Self):

The significance of face-to-face interaction at the local level in contemporary culture notwithstanding, (Boden and Molotch, 1994), increasingly, mediated experience provides resources for the construction of a sense of personal identity. This symbolic project, according to Giddens, is an on-going narrative of the self for which symbolic materials from the immediate environment as well as mediated experiences are utilised. Individuals actively incorporate many elements of mediated experience into their daily lives. But they actively discriminate among types of available information as well as interpret it in their own terms, and by so doing, they impose their own order on diversity through selection¹ (Giddens, 1991: 188). Such processes are consistent

¹ For instance, an individual may select which newspaper to read out of several others, and then select which of its contents to focus on. Such appropriation is in line with what he calls 'the principle of the avoidance of cognitive dissonance' (Giddens, 1991: 188), by which he means the exclusion or reinterpretation of potentially disturbing knowledge, as part of the mechanism for maintaining ontological security (which he explains as a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual).

with the purpose of maintenance of a coherent narrative of self-identity. But the modern world confronts the self with dilemmas or difficulties that have to be resolved in order to preserve the coherent self narrative. One such tension is the conflicting tendencies between fragmentation and integration. The individual is presented with an indefinite range of possibilities, (including options for behaviour), that can have a fragmentary impact on the self. The individual, faced with a variety of differing encounters, each of which may require different forms of appropriate conduct, may sensitively adjust his behaviour to suit each context of interaction. But this need not be read as fragmentation of the self because as Giddens argues, 'a person may make use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative. Thus a cosmopolitan person is one precisely who draws strength from being at home in a variety of contexts' (Giddens, 1991: 190)

Another point of conflict is the tension between personalised and commodified experience that capitalism promotes. 'Market-governed freedom of individual choice becomes an enveloping framework of individual self-expression, ... the project of the self becomes translated into one of the possession of desired goods and the pursuit of artificially framed styles of life' (Giddens, 1991: 197-8) (Also Bauman, 1989: 189). The media are said to be centrally involved in this experience, not just through their advertising functions, but also by presenting lifestyle models and coherent narratives that the reader or viewer can identify with. Broadcast serials suggest models for the construction of narratives of the self. Besides, soap operas can provide viewers with 'a sense of reflexive control over life circumstances, a feeling of a coherent narrative which is a reassuring balance to difficulties in sustaining the narrative of the self in actual social situations' (Giddens, 1991: 199).

The modern subject, like an unofficial biographer, is engaged in maintaining a meaningful on-going life story of the self. Individual differences in such narratives are inevitable given the diversity of cultural circumstances out of which emerges the self as a social product. Giddens again suggests that with the increasing globalisation of media,

a multifarious number of milieux are, in principle, rendered visible to anyone who cares to glean the relevant information. The collage effect of Television

and newspapers gives specific form to the juxtaposition of settings and potential lifestyle choices ... The media offer access to settings with which the individual may never come into contact; but at the same time some boundaries between settings that were previously separate are overcome (Giddens, 1991: 84).

John Thompson, drawing on Giddens ideas, in similar fashion, also states that

Living in a mediated world involves a constant interweaving of different forms of experience...we think of ourselves and our life trajectories primarily in relation to the others, whom and the events which, we encounter ... in the practical contexts of our daily lives. However ... mediated experience ... assumes a greater and greater role in the process of self formation. Individuals increasingly draw on mediated experience to inform and refashion the project of self (Thompson, quoted in Moores, 2000: 38)

Reflexivity is inherent in this project of the self, and it involves a constant monitoring of one's routine activities and a reflection on various lifestyle options. Individuals may revise their regular practices in the light of new information obtained from broadcast discourses about concerns such as global ecological issues or health matters.

As Giddens observes:

The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems ... the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices among a diversity of options (Giddens, 1991: 5).

Summary: Globalization fundamentally transforms the relationship between inhabited places and cultural practices, experiences and identities. Modernity is inherently globalizing because of its dynamics of time-space separation and disembedding mechanisms which enable interaction away from the particularities of locales. Places are no longer the only supports of our identity as local characteristics of place are intruded by, and reorganised in terms of mediated experience. The world of the individual and the general universe of social activity within which collective social life is enacted are global. Locality can no longer defend a sequestered existence and so distant events may be integrated into the frameworks of personal and collective experience. Mediated experience therefore influences self identity and the basic organisation of social relations (i.e. the construction of new communalities).

2.4: Diasporas

2.4.1: *Embedding in transnational flows:*

Contemporary global flows criss-cross the artificial boundaries of national territories. Capital, technology, data, the transnational communications system and people movements, all transgress geo-political boundaries. It is in this context that Appadurai introduces the concept of ‘scapes’ to express the web of intersecting global processes in which cultural formations are nurtured. He identifies five dimensions: *ethnoscapes*, referring to the landscape of moving groups of people who constitute the shifting world of today and includes tourists, immigrants, refugees and others; *mediascapes*, in reference to the worldwide distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information, as well as the images of the world which the media create; *technoscapes*, the global configuration of ever-changing technology, moving at high speed across boundaries; *financscapes*, involving currency markets, stock exchanges, and commodity speculation moving money across the world; and *ideoscapes*, movement of ideas and images, or ideological movements seeking power (Appadurai, 1996: 296-301). Current global flows, according to Appadurai, occur in and through disjunctures (or fractures) between these ‘scapes’, the complex relationships between them driven by money flows, political possibilities and availability of labour (Appadurai, 1996: 297-8). This representation of the complex inter-relationships in contemporary global processes provides an integrated infrastructural web of interconnections in which to situate diasporas as dynamic transnational networks, rather than mere groups of displaced people, and an important feature of the global cultural mosaic.

2.4.2: *Overview:*

The term ‘diaspora’ is said to derive from the Greek word – dia, (meaning through), and speirein (to scatter). Originally concerned with migration and colonisation, it refers to a nation or people group in exile and connotes a home from where the dispersion occurs (Brah, 1996:181). A diaspora is constituted when communities of settlers articulate themselves in terms of displacement, from a homeland. The homeland represents a sort of template or distant parent for the new community, as it constructs its collective subjectivity. Diasporas, therefore, tend to take the form of the nation of origin. Furthermore, diasporas emerge from migrations of collectivities, not individual exile, and are places of long-term, or even permanent, community

formations. In the context of groups like the Jews and transatlantic Africans, the diaspora experience connoted violence, displacement from a homeland, and collective trauma (Fazal and Tsagarousianou, 2002:7).

The term diaspora has become useful for describing a range of cultural formations proliferating in the late-modern era of rapid people movements and the formation of transnational communities engendered by globalization, particularly by international communications technologies and the activities of transnational media corporations - technologies which do away with distance and suspend time, and so create new forms of connection and identification, as well as dislocation and disjuncture between people, places and cultures (Gillespie, 1995: 7). It thus transcends the limitations of national perspectives on culture. Such developments challenge essentialist assumptions about peoples and their cultures. They also validate Edward Said's perception that the crossing of boundaries brings about a sense of the '*permeability and contingency of cultures, enabling us to see others not as ontologically given, but as historically constituted*' (quoted in Morley and Robins (2000: 123). The diasporic environment is a setting where differences are brought into close proximity; a place of contrasts and cross-fertilization of ideas, cultures, syncretisation, hybridization, and of new beginnings. Situated, metaphorically, between place of origin and place of settlement, diasporas are confronted with contradictory needs to integrate into the country of settlement and maintaining their distinct identity and contact with the homeland. The tension inherent in this position and the strategies developed to cope with integration and the seduction of romanticized essentialism, tend towards producing a schizophrenic consciousness and hybrid forms. They are sites of cultural juxtaposition, intense negotiation and transformations, and it may even be argued that they are sites of new pluralist cultural developments. They also challenge prevailing, dominant, untested notions and ways of thinking, recalling Edward Said's observation that '*exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience*' (2000: 185)¹.

¹ "The exile knows that in a secular and contingent world, homes are always provisional. Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. *Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience*".

2.4.3: *Diasporas and the nation-state - interrogation and identification:*¹

Diasporas have an ambiguous relationship with the nation-state system. Territorially they rely on the state system to construct their transnational communities and networks, and derive from the nation-state many of the features and resources from which their identity and character are defined. Usually, though not always, the homeland, said to act as an anchor for the diaspora, is itself a nation-state. Yet Diasporas also interrogate and undermine the nation-state system, and are seen as a distortion of the international order. As transnational phenomena, they call into question the philosophical boundaries of the state of which they are citizens, and in some respects, they may even pose a threat to host societies as they can be exploited by extremist and dangerous groups acting as ‘the enemy within’.

Gilroy provides a counterpoint to the perception that diasporas are an aberration on the political landscape. He attributes a more optimistic purpose and dynamic, asserting that ‘diasporas challenge the cultural politics of the nation-state, opening up a space in which resistance and the affirmation of difference points to a more pluralistic conception of nationality and possibly to its transcendence’ (Gilroy, 1993b: 62). This hints at the possibility of resisting the homogenizing dynamic of the nation-state apparatus in its own quest for a ‘national identity’ that marginalizes difference. Gilroy’s view appears to be a more considered position than Appadurai’s premature and exaggerated proclamations (apparently shared by Melucci, 1996: 219) about the end of the nation-state and the rise of ‘transnations’ of diasporic communities (Appadurai, 1996: 172-177). Such views emanate from the perception of the diminution of the nation-state’s form, autonomy, and authority with the emergence of supranational governing bodies like the EU, UN, WTO, IMF, and other transnational

¹ Modern diasporas are formed within national spaces and therefore are embroiled in the culture and politics of modern nations. Nations are artificial, historically constituted, political, and cultural hegemonies that require a standardized ‘national culture’ in order to function as a modern state (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990). As hegemonic entities, they function to forge a relatively unified identity out of disparate groups. National identities are, therefore, artificial hegemonic constructions fashioned from plural identities. Most nations are not homogeneous cultural entities, and in many, active struggle and contestation is a significant feature of their contemporary political and cultural life, an observation also expressed by Anthony D. Smith: “More and more people are realizing that the world is ‘plural’; that is to say the so-called ‘nation-state’ is rarely a true appellation, for few states have ethnically homogeneous populations. On the contrary, most are composed of two or more ethnic communities, jostling for influence and power, or living in uneasy harmony within the same state border” (Smith, quoted in Tomlinson, 1991: 73). Enclosing plurality, nations are impure, dynamic, and unstable – a challenge to the static, essentialist terms in which they tend to be defined.

relations, networks, and flows - developments that are attributed to globalization which is engendering the transcendence of the nation-state (McGrew, 1992: 87-90).¹

The irony of the optimistic vision that Gilroy alludes to lies in the fact that most diasporas still bear their previous national identification, with the hallmarks of artificially 'homogenized identities' (such as Ghanaian, Turkish, Spanish or Italian), internally constituted by a mosaic of differences. Hence, far from being homogeneous entities diasporas are said to be differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, despite their construction around commonalities (Brah, 1996:184). Traditions in diasporas are also said to vary from person to person, and even within persons, and are constantly being revised in response to the migration experience (Hall, 2000: 220). The Ghanaian diaspora shares these attributes as a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual plurality, epitomizing relative unity from a diversity of peoples, dialects, customs and traditions.

2.4.4: Diasporas and the transnational terrain:

As already noted, the transnational terrain inhabited by diasporas is marked by complex interconnections involving various flows and an array of institutional and collective actors and forms of cooperation. Tsagarousianou explains that 'this terrain is shaped by transnational flows that defy the convention of traditional geopolitical forms of representation of space and by localities that are themselves continuously reconfigured and reshaped by the very same transnational flows' (2007: 74)². The task of delineating this field of complex interactions conceptually has been embraced by various scholars:

¹ Ulrich Beck (2000b) in an article titled 'The Cosmopolitan Perspective: Sociology of the Second Age of Modernity', contends that the whole world of nation sovereignty and the 'container theory' of society is fading away – that, in 'the second age of modernity', globalisation changes not only the relations between and beyond nation states, but also the inner quality of the social and political itself, indicated by 'reflexive cosmopolitization' (in the *British Journal of Sociology* 51(1): 79-106).

² Tsagarousianou, stressing the idea of connectivity suggests that transnational interactions may involve routines such as remittances, international calls, faxes, email, satellite TV broadcasting, simultaneous media access through internet sources and TV stations, international conferences, the different varieties of international tourism and formalised agreements of international organisations and non-governmental groups. Furthermore, she suggests that the more structured practices take place within transnational social fields that connect people and institutions from different countries which also provide rules and resources that govern interaction at transnational level. And then there are transnational communities of immigrants in advanced countries and those constructed by other groups that cross the globe (2007: 75)

Victor Roudometof suggests three layers of transnational activities: transnational *interactions and practices*, transnational *social spaces*, and transnational *social fields*, (2005: 120-121)¹. Diasporas are understood to occupy these domains in various ways.

Roger Rouse appeals to a transnational paradigm with diasporic dimensions. Drawing on research in the linked Mexican communities of Aguililla (Michoacan) and Redwood City (California), Rouse argued that the nature of the migratory traffic rendered inadequate the modern imagery of (bounded) nation-states and national languages, of coherent communities and consistent subjectivities as previously conceived, recognising a new kind of social space of interaction (Rouse, 1991: 8). He hence uses the term '*transnational circuits*' to emphasise the continuous circulation of people, goods, money, and information through which various settlements become interwoven, and come to constitute a single community across a variety of sites (Rouse, 1991: 14)².

Nina Glick Schiller (2005)³ delineates three different contexts: transnational *social fields* that migrants establish to connect their homeland to the new land; *transborder networks* of social relationship and communication that connect migrants to multiple states; and *local citizenship* and its *transborder* ramifications. She defines '*social field*' as an unbounded terrain of multiple interlocking networks, and utilises the concept of *social spaces* to refer to the ways in which social relations are structured by power⁴. According to her, *transnational social spaces* can be conceived of as consisting of flows of human interactivity where relationships are free floating, in

¹ **Victor Roudometof's** three layers of transnational activities - transnational *interactions and practices*, transnational *social spaces*, and transnational *social fields*, each entails different degrees of structuration regarding the permanence of the transnational practices performed by actors (2005: 120-121). In his view, clusters of routinised intersecting practices over time may institute social spaces that give rise to and sustain transnational communities. Diasporas are understood to occupy such transnational social spaces.

² In a study of the migration of rural Mexicans from the Aguililla municipio across the border with the US, Roger Rouse noted how the new social space created defied existing descriptions of migrations as a movement from one community and environment to another, and preferred to describe the migratory traffic in terms of 'transnational circuits' (Rouse, 1991).

³ In a paper titled 'Transborder Citizenship: An Outcome of Legal Pluralism within Transnational Social Fields' (2005). In extensive publications Nina Glick Schiller has developed perspectives on migration, transnational and diasporic processes and social relations

⁴ In other publications with collaborators (1999, 2003, 2004),

contrast to *transnational social fields* in which relations are more structured and less 'fluid'.¹

The transnational architecture in which diasporas are constructed, is therefore shown to be complex, linking multiple localities and more fluid landscapes of flows and networks. Transcending the constraints of physical place-centred landscapes, this challenges the spatial logics of states, territories and boundaries. Nevertheless, as Tsagarousianou points out, locality remains a space of experience and provides the context through which the 'global', or transnational flows and relationships, become intelligible to those who make up a diaspora. The terrain, she observes, becomes a complex, multi-layered scenario comprising static topographies of sites, dynamic geographies of flows, and populated by goods, ideas, technologies and people, which pose challenges for terrain-mapping (2007: 82-3)². The idea of 'transnational circuit' (Rouse) becomes useful in the discussion of the alternative geography of the new diasporic landscapes which are marked by transversal flows involving the circulation people, money, information and goods. Tsagarousianou argues that many of the activities and networks established within their boundaries transcend the relationships, however complex, between place of origin and place of settlement. Other resources and connections at play may range from establishing and maintaining links and exchanges with other 'co-ethnic' or 'co-national' migrant populations residing in remote locations, crucial in imagining and activating the diaspora, as well as strategic or organic connections with other 'non co-national' migrants who may be in physical proximity or remote (Tsagarousianou, 2007: 91-92). She concludes that the 'ethnic community', and by implication, diasporic space, comprises an extended field of action and experience far exceeding a specific locale (supraterritoriality). It is dependent on and shaped by transnational flows, relationships and practices (Tsagarousianou, 2007: 93).

Such concepts are useful for understanding the Ghanaian diaspora as embedded in complex flows that transcend the intense relationship with their homeland.

¹ This formulation draws on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1977) which sees society as the intersection of various fields within a structure of politics.

² Marcus, (1998: 79) recommended a multi-sited ethnography that recognises the integration and interpenetration of the local and the global that can 'examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space'. This strategy is exemplified by Roger Rouse's approach to the study of Mexican migrations across the US border

2.4.5: Diasporas & the global electronic cultural space

The powerful global media are responsible for the creation of a universal electronic cultural space (Morley and Robins, 1995) with ever advancing technologies that are transforming the formative processes of diasporas and creating new ways in which such phenomena are conceived and experienced. Contemporary diasporas differ from earlier prototypes in a significant sense due to the development of new and faster communications technologies which facilitate temporal and spatial compression. Modern migrants can ‘forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement’ (Basch et. al., 1994: 7), for instance through the transmission of events ‘live as they happen’ (Dayan and Katz, 1992), and the possibilities for what Tsagarousianou calls ‘contemporaneity and synchronicity’ a convergence that enables ‘coexistence’ and ‘experiencing together’ by dispersed populations (Tsagarousianou, 2004: 62). Intense and constant interaction at transnational level is now a reality. Broadcasting for instance synchronises the occurrence of an event in one place (like the live transmission of a football match or state occasion) and its reception in another place simultaneously, creating a sense of being in two places at once (Scannell, 1996: 91). In the diasporic sense, it enables the simultaneous linking together of disparate populations over vast distances and across transnational space, affirming bonds and axes of identification that defy political and geographical boundaries. This extends to diasporic media which produce ‘new spaces’ of ‘synchronized’ experience with implications for group integration and identification, as well as relations of power and social hierarchies (Tsagarousianou, 2004: 62-3).¹

The new technological possibilities also introduce new perspectives on the idea of ‘home’. Rapid mobility and electronic communications mean that people can virtually be in two places at once in the sense of transnational commuting. Such possibilities shift the emphasis of diasporic experience from displacement and re-territorialization to proximity and connectivity (Tomlinson, 1999) as remote geographical locations are brought together by electronic technologies that ‘abolish’ distance and time.

¹ See chapter six for a discussion of the impact of the football world cup on Ghanaian identity as an example of the impact of ‘experiencing together’.

In the case of the Ghanaian diaspora, as this study subsequently demonstrates, this global electronic medium facilitates a more intense relationship with their homeland, and links them up with other Ghanaians elsewhere (for instance through radio phone-in programmes). The impact of the synchronised experience of the football World Cup of 2006 on Ghanaian identity is cited in chapter six. The global media's role in the creation of a sense of a pan-global black presence also sustains the subjects' imagination of their black identity, linking them in solidarity with the concerns and achievements of other black peoples elsewhere in the world. This becomes evident in responses to the presidential aspirations of Barrack Obama, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, among other things (in chapters five and nine respectively). Furthermore, the global media have been instrumental in the global influence of 'black culture' on youth and popular cultures which serve as cultural storehouses for Ghanaians (chapter six). Moreover, the media also institutionalised and internationalised the struggle for black emancipation and social justice (Gibbons, 1989: 209-210).

2.4.6: *Diaspora typologies, categories, and evolving definition:*

Attempts have been made by scholars to redefine the concept of 'diaspora'. William Safran (1991: 83-4) presented a set of defining characteristics of 'diaspora' including:

- dispersal from a *homeland* to other countries,
- they have *bonds* of common vision, memory or myth about their homeland from disparate geographical locations
- they seek the development of their autonomous cultural and social needs against the sense of possible *rejection* by the host societies
- they support and hope for eventual return to their homeland
- they are committed to the maintenance or restoration of this homeland
- their consciousness and solidarity are "importantly defined" by this continuing relationship with the homeland

To this characterisation Cohen (1997) makes additional proposals, including groups that disperse for voluntary reasons or in flight from aggression, persecution or hardship; indications of the community's strong links to the past and resistance to assimilation. Besides, that diaspora communities share a common identity not just with the homeland but with their kindred communities in other countries. He even

suggests a time-lapse for a community to become a diaspora, and recognition of positive aspects of diasporas, like their creative potentials issuing from tensions between ethnic, national and transnational identities (Cohen, 1997)¹. Elsewhere it is suggested that their common identity is complemented by the establishment of diasporic communicative networks and spaces (Fazal and Tsagarousianou, 2002).

The need for an ever more comprehensive definition is a commentary on the limitations of the prescriptive approach that attempts to encapsulate the meaning of the term in a closed set of features. Cognisant of this, James Clifford cautions against the construction of a definition of the term based on an ‘ideal type’ of diaspora ‘with the consequence that groups become identified as more or less diasporic, having only two, or three, or four of the basic six features’. ‘Moreover’, he argues, ‘at different times in their history, societies may wax and wane in diasporism, depending on changing possibilities in their host countries and transnationally’ and that ‘whatever the working list of diasporic features, no society can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history. And the discourse of diaspora will necessarily be modified as it is translated and adopted’ (1994: 306). Such arguments are hard to refute. As a dynamic concept, diaspora retains the centrality of such features as displacement and migrancy, but also flexibly accommodates more novel notions of the phenomenon which previous inadequate characterizations excluded. More recent notions of diaspora, like the types engendered by late-modern transnational migration, and the transnational Islamic Umma (Mandaville, 2001), challenge the restricted definitions advocated earlier.

However, the need to apply a critical edge to the definition of the ‘authentic’ diaspora has led to arguments based on attributions to E.P. Thompson’s assertion that it is not enough for a social formation objectively to fulfil the material conditions prescribed by a category, and that a collective subjective understanding is necessary for a designation, to acquire any meaning (Thompson, cited in Tsagarousianou, 2004: 60). Applied to modern conceptions of diasporas this would suggest that not all ‘diasporas’ fit the description, and that what constitutes a bona-fide diaspora is a common

¹ Taking into account the variations in the concept, Cohen (1997) proposed a comprehensive range in the categories of diasporas to include *Imperial* (e.g. the British), *Victims* (e.g. Jews, Africans, and Armenians), *Labour* (e.g. Indian indentured labourers), *Trade* (e.g. the Chinese and Lebanese), and *Cultural* (e.g. the Caribbeans abroad).

awareness, self-mobilization around a diasporic imagination and the construction of appropriate discourses (Tsagarousianou, 2002: 60). This is a refined critical perspective and a reasonable proposition, and the features outlined have been considered in the evaluation of the diasporic credentials of the Ghanaian community in London. Nevertheless, such arguments still seem to straddle the terrain of prescriptive and exclusivist definitions reminiscent of the ‘essential checklist’ characterizations suggested by Safran and Cohen which, though useful in defining the field, have been criticized for being restrictive and inadequate (Tsagarousianou, 2004: 55). A perspective that prescribes ideal conditions which potentially disqualify types of putative diasporas on the basis of their apparent failure to meet certain criteria revisits the old exclusivist paradigms of imposed strict meanings and authenticity tests, fraught with difficulties, not least because of the hint of arbitrariness of the exclusivist criteria proposed. Despite these misgivings, however, the application of conceptual rigour to diasporas is desirable and useful. But it needs to be tempered by flexibility and accommodation of novelty for a discourse that is hybridizing in new global conditions where previous atypical formations have come to assume the status of diasporas (e.g. Islamic Umma).

For the purposes of this study the application of the term takes on board the conceptual definitions considered in the foregoing discussions and the meanings acquired by the term in the larger semantic domain of its contemporary popular usage. The thesis utilises the concept in its coverage of the paradox of ethnic sameness and heterogeneity as the term encompasses a sense of shared history and culture, but also divergences and differences, acknowledging the ways in which identities are transformed through relocation, cross-cultural exchange and interaction. This makes it relevant for exploring and understanding the Black diaspora in general (in chapter 4), and the place of the multiethnic Ghanaian entity as a strand within it (in chapters 5 and 6). Significant in all this is the idea of ‘*homeland*’ for all it represents, especially as an anchor and resource base for the diaspora. For Ghanaians abroad, the homeland (Ghana) is an important point of reference, orientation, and resource for identity, offering unconditional welcome, among other things, and is useful in understanding the cultural proclivities and nostalgic sentiments of Ghanaians abroad. In the case of the black diaspora, Africa as original homeland is the imaginative anchor inspiring ‘returnee’ and ‘roots’ ideologies and discourses, providing a heritage and raw

materials for identity formation, and the rationale for cooperation and solidarity in the global black diaspora.

2.4.7: Home away from home: Imagination, Ambivalence and Politics

Issues of 'home' are caught up in dichotomies, the complexities of contemporary globalization flows, and the power and politics of belonging. Diasporas are grafted into the life of the place of settlement but retain strong social, psychological, spiritual, and emotional links with their 'homeland', a source of feelings of ambivalence compounded by their heterogeneous constitution. The notion of 'home' is dichotomised: is the place of settlement - the place of 'lived experience of locality' the real home, or is home still the place of origin offering the comforting assurance of unconditional acceptance and the possibility of eventual return? And in a globalized world could both places be home simultaneously. It may even be suggested that the issue is irrelevant since mobility and its implied nomadism make a case for homelessness. This is a vexed question, not least for practical, sentimental and political reasons. Avtar Brah poses the question rhetorically:

What is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin". On the other hand, home is also a lived experience of a locality (Brah, 1996:192).

Hall (1993: 355) posts a reminder about the dynamism and transformation to which links between diasporas and their original homelands are subject to; the homeland and the country of settlement are both caught up in global processes of transformation. But globalization impacts various localities unevenly and different local contexts determine the nature and texture of the outcomes of negotiations with the global. This divergence in development trajectories between places, despite tendencies towards homogenization, means that the 'home' that was left by the migrant exists only in memory but has changed in reality. What is reified in the conception of home as a reference point and the source of resources for essentialization purposes, is only partial and vestigial because of the dynamic scenenario. This questions the emphasis sometimes placed on the importance for diasporas of maintaining strong links and identifications with the 'homeland'. In that sense Anderson's idea of the significance of imagination in the construction of a sense of community, works both ways as the

reified sense of the homeland belongs as much in the imagination as the diaspora itself is an imagined community.

The issue of 'home' is also embroiled in questions of *power and politics*. Brah makes reference to the complex political and personal struggles involved in the social regulation of 'belonging' (Brah, 1996: 194). Other commentators also acknowledge such issues and their importance:

Within the framework of contemporary diasporas, the notions of 'home' and when a location becomes home are therefore linked with the issues related to inclusion or exclusion which tend to be subjectively experienced depending upon the circumstances. When does a location become a home? How can one distinguish between 'feeling at home and staking a claim to a place as one's own' (Fazal and Tsagarousianou, 2002: 11-12).

The context of a dominant and powerful host society with its own traditions, politics, class consciousness and social stratification, among other things, such as British society with its imperial and colonial history, means that the notion of home as the place of settlement by an immigrant community, is not simply a matter of choice, but also the subject of political struggles – 'staking a claim to a place as one's own' in spite of the challenges. The task is complicated by identifications with reference points from the homeland. Werbner, commenting on the British situation, argues that it is not only Western representations of the 'Other' which essentialise, and that minority ethnic groups also essentialise their imagined communities for political and other purposes. 'Within the spaces of civil society, the politics of ethnicity in Britain are not so much imposed as grounded in essentialist self-imaginings of community' (Werbner, 1997: 230). As Tsagarousianou reiterates, the link between diasporas and countries of origin is often fraught with tensions and ambivalence because of the juxtaposition of diasporic subjects to definitions of themselves derived from the country of origin (2001: 29-30). Inter-generational differences add to the complexity. The second generation, in particular, born and bred in Britain, who would like to think of Britain as their primary home are caught up in identity struggles in which their parents' generation's fixation with the original homeland and the wider society's discourses on immigrants, are a frequent reminder of their different history, origin or even race.

It has been argued that emphasis on the constitutive role of place of origin can distract attention from the creative possibilities available to diasporas. However, diasporic identification with the original homeland need not be associated with negative connotations around nostalgia and essentialism. Even though the primacy of the relationship with an original homeland is often over-emphasized, it cannot be denied that resources from this relationship are a significant part of the raw materials from various environments with which diasporas are constituted. It provides a position from which other options are assessed and negotiations conducted. Imageries and metaphors of cross-fertilization and hybridization become useful in the attempt to describe the outcomes of such synthesis. Such metaphors express the ‘new creations’ or ‘new beginnings’ (Brah), the creative possibilities that emerge from creolized, syncretized forms. James Clifford alludes to this when he comments that diasporic identities are ‘the product of active engagement in ... cultural and political action that articulates elements from different cultures and different frames of action and experience in one, more or less coherent whole (Clifford cited in Fazal and Tsagarousianou, 2002: 12)

2.4.8: Diasporas and anthropological/ postmodernist approaches to culture:

Diasporas question previous approaches to the study of cultures which situated non-Western subjects as ‘alien’ or belonging to a different world ‘out there’.

Anthropologists like Malinowski are said to belong to the tradition that regarded the ‘other’ in this way as the ‘other’ embodied ‘different ways of thinking, reasoning, judging and behaving that were discontinuous with “our own” and acted as alternative “to us” (Cohen, 1997: 134). Distance and cultural differences seemed to justify this approach with the implicit conception of cultural boundedness and wholeness.

Migration and the creation of diasporas eliminated that distance and brought cultures into intimate proximity, upsetting the ‘us-here/ them-there’ paradigm, the subjects being no longer ‘over there’ but rather ‘over here’. Physical proximity is not synonymous with sameness or similarity and so Geertz (1993) cautions against assumptions that gaps in understanding have been overcome by mere juxtaposition. Proximity could even prompt a strengthening of group identity and the maintaining of deep differences.

In contrast to sociologists' and psychologists' assumptions about identities as solid structures complexly built from a variety of 'building blocks' (Cohen, 1997), postmodernists, disputing such assumptions, suggest instead the recognition of multiple subject positions that constitute identity. Postmodernity enunciates difference by choice through a consumer market that offers an endless variety of styles, identities and subcultures. Besides, attention is drawn to the emergence and advancement of new mixed cultures in the contact zones between different cultures – referred to in terms of hybridity (discussed in detail subsequently). Hommi Bhabha, for instance, proposes that the departure from singularities of class and gender as primary conceptual and organizational categories has resulted in the awareness of a multiplicity of subject positions such as race, gender, generation, institutional location, geo-political locale, and sexual orientation which constitute modern identities. He also advocates a departure from 'originary and initial subjectivities' to a focus on the 'spaces' between cultures as the terrain where new signs of identity and of collaboration and contestation are produced (Bhabha, 1994: 1-2). James Clifford on the other hand advocated an innovative alternative to the anthropologists' tradition of localizing and 'nativizing' other cultures. He suggested an approach that considers how cultures travel, which takes into account cultural interactivity (1992: 101).¹

2.5: Issues of hybridism/ syncretism:

As previously noted, globalization involves contradictory dynamics that are unevenly experienced at different places and times (Giddens, 1990: 64; Hall et al., 1993: 74). McGrew (1992:74-75) identifies a number of such opposing tendencies in contemporary culture: *universalization* versus *particularization*; *homogenization* versus *differentiation*; *integration* versus *fragmentation*; *centralization* versus *decentralization*; and *juxtaposition* versus *syncretization*. Time-space compression (Harvey, 1989) results in distinct cultures coming into close proximity. Social and cultural boundaries may be reinforced, but shared cultural spaces are also created and hybrid forms produced from the cross-fertilization of ideas, values, knowledge and institutions. The tensions and ambiguities caused by such contradictory tendencies

¹ Clifford writes: 'Why not focus on any cultures furthest range of travel, while also looking at its centres, its villages, its intensive field sites? How do groups negotiate themselves in external relationship, and how is a culture also a site of travel for others? How are spaces traversed from outside? How is one groups core another's periphery? Looked at this way, there would be no question of relegating to the margins a long list: missionaries, converts, literate or educated informants, explorers, prospectors, tourists, travellers, ethnographers, migrant labourers, recent immigrants, etc (1992: 101).

may also be responsible for conflict as well as new creative possibilities in the world system. Diasporas are at the centre of these dynamics and possibilities.

Mennel's claim that human species adapt to varying conditions/ environments not by biological but by cultural differentiation (Mennel, 1990: 359), is debatable, but it can be suggested that by transculturation people adapt to new environments. Migration of people always entails 'travelling cultures', (to borrow James Clifford's phrase). The migrants may be considered as receptacles or embodiments of previous cultural experience which is brought into new environments where mutation continues. Hence they are alike and yet different from their kindred in the homeland, a paradox of sameness and difference. As T. S. Eliot observed:

The migrations of modern times...have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these. There has therefore been something in the removals analogous in nature to religious schism. The people have taken with them only a part of the total culture. ...The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture: it will be complicated sometimes by whatever relations are established with some native race and further by immigration from other than the original source. In this way, peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture-clash appear'. (Eliot, quoted in Hall and du Gay (eds.) 1996: 54)

Ironically, though this statement was made in reference to colonial migration and settler societies, the congruence and resonance with contemporary third world migration is obvious. Bhabha refers to such borderline affects and identifications, alikeness and divergence, as culture's 'in-between'; partial culture that is also the connective tissue as well as boundary between cultures (Bhabha, 1994: 1-2). This is the terrain of the hybrid where subaltern identities occupy an 'in-between' place between competing identities, but is also a location which makes the subaltern uniquely different from either alternative. This is but one version of hybridity. In another sense, hybridity is understood to be routine and pervasive.

Hybridity conjures biological imagery derived from notions of breeding in plants and animals, carried over to the cultural sphere through notions of racial mixing such as miscegenation (interbreeding of races) and creolization, and laced with negative connotations (Hannerz, 1987; Nederveen Pieterse 1995; Friedman 1994, 1995). The idea is deployed in recent times in a positive and celebratory mode that undermines ideas of racial purity (Papastergiadis, 1997). It is even taken further to suggest

superiority, the hybrid being a stronger strain, a more literal application of its biological properties in cultural terms.

The concept of *hybridity* has gained currency in postmodernists' discourses on diasporic cultural formations, regarding migrants as the embodiments of hybrid consciousness. Hall argues that the new (postcolonial) diasporas are marked by the development of hybrid cultures. Suggesting that the tensions created by the contradictory tendencies between globalization and localization entail cultural processes, he argues that the emerging cultural identities are transitional and dynamic, drawing upon a variety of traditions and synthesizing them into new forms (Hall, 1992: 310-314). They challenge arguments about global homogenization, and though they maintain strong identifications with the traditions of the 'homeland', a return to the past is impossible because of progressive transformation engendered by modernization. The understanding of identity as a project, open and complex, always under construction and never finished (Hall, 1993: 362), is also useful in this respect.

Hybridity poses problems for postmodern theory, especially about the dichotomy between its supposed interruptive (transgressive) power and its routineness and pervasiveness in an ever-changing world. Werbner and Modood argue that

It makes sense that hybrids are perceived to be endowed with unique powers, good or evil and that, hybrid moments, spaces or objects are hedged in elaborate rituals, carefully guarded and separated from mundane reality. Hybridity is here a theoretical meta-construction of social order' (1997: 1)

The author Salman Rushdie, averse to defenders of 'cultural purity', effusively lauds his controversial novel *'The Satanic Verses'* as a celebration of hybridity and a description of what mass migration makes of the world:

The *Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Melange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness comes into the world*. It is the great possibility that mass migration gives the world, and I have tried to embrace it. *The Satanic Verses* is for change-by-fusion, change-by-conjoining. It is a love song to our mongrel selves' (Rushdie, 1991: 394)

Implicit in this is the idea that the hybrid experience is increasingly the global experience. Critics argue that such a view does not take cognisance of, nor resolve the

tensions between polarities within the concept of hybridity: the hybrid as a product of two distinct cultures, occupying a site between them on one hand, and on the other, the view that culture is by nature dynamic, fluid, protean, ever-changing - what Werbner describes as 'organic unconscious hybridity' which despite the illusion of boundedness, evolve historically through 'unreflective borrowings, mimetic appropriations, exchanges and inventions' (Werbner, 1997: 4-5). Renato Rosaldo explains further the two distinct polarities in the concept:

On the one hand, hybridity can imply a space betwixt and between two zones of purity in a manner that follows biological usage that distinguishes two discrete species and the hybrid pseudo-species that results from their combination. Similarly, the anthropological concept of syncretism asserts, for example, that folk Catholicism occupies a hybrid site midway between the purity of Catholicism and that of indigenous religion. On the other hand hybridity can be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contains no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation (two-way borrowing and lending between cultures). Instead of hybridity versus purity, this view suggests that it is hybridity all the way down (Rosaldo, 1995: xv).

Among the problems associated with the concept is the idea of the hybrid as a cross-breed between two 'pure' groups. But there is widespread recognition that there are no pure cultures. Appadurai authoritatively states that 'native people confined to and by the places to which they belong, groups unsullied by contact with a larger world, have probably never existed' (1988: 39). And Levi-Strauss is more comprehensive:

All cultures are synthetic, the result of borrowings and mixtures that have occurred since time immemorial, though at different rates, and each society is multicultural and over centuries has arrived at its own original synthesis, a mixture that forms its culture at any given moment. Cultural identities are therefore cultures in process, but they acquire specific meanings in a given context (Levi-Strauss, quoted in Friedman, 1990: 80).

Cultures, therefore, are continually in the process of hybridity. This questions the meaning of cultural identity and boundedness, considering that culture is dynamic and continuously changing. Is there an anchor to the sense of belonging in the midst of fluidity? Would perpetual syncretization sustain any sense of membership to particular communities? Again, if like Rosaldo suggests, hybridization is a perpetual condition of all cultures and always has been, then it is hardly a useful term for contemporary cultural intermixing resulting from globalization. In a critique Nedervene Pieterse points out the tautology of the idea that 'contemporary accelerated

globalization means the hybridization of hybrid cultures', and suggests that the term remains meaningful only as a critique of essentialism (1995: 64).

Besides, it is argued that the creation of hybridity is not a power-neutral process and attention is drawn to the role of power relations in structuring the hybrid mix. Behind the perception of 'equal measures' is the reality of the inequality in combination. The concept of hybridity cannot accommodate issues of class exploitation and domination. Besides, there is the unequal balance in the cultural resources and hegemonies involved such as the West and multinational capitalism, which determine to a great extent the terms of the mixture and the nature of the newness produced. Aijaz Ahmad, for instance, questions the deterministic role of imperial power in cultural processes:

It is doubtless true that a global informational regime is being constructed. But is one to celebrate this as a globalized hybridity or to conceptualise it as the penetration of far-flung, globally dispersed households by uniform structures of imperial ideology? (Ahmad, 1995: 12)

A counterpoint to such views is that they fail to take into account the unpredictability of outcomes of these processes even for the hegemonic forces involved. Kevin Robins points out that the postcolonial diasporas involving the movement of populations from the Third to the First World has implications for the cultural identity of such former colonialists, now experiencing a sort of reverse invasion of the centre from the periphery. He observes: 'through this irruption of empire, the certain and centred perspective of the old colonial order is confronted and confused' (Robins, 1991: 33). Nederveen Pieterse adds that 'hegemony is not merely reproduced but *refigured* in the process of hybridization' (1995: 57). This means hegemonies are also subject to the forces shaping the world and are not immune to their consequences.

Finally, Bakhtin draws attention to the productive potential of hybridization:

Such unconscious hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words (Bakhtin, quoted in Hall and du Gay, 1996: 58).

Despite the debates around the implications of the deployment of the idea of hybridization, it is useful in describing the outcomes of the cultural mixing that globalization has catalyzed. In particular, the notion of hybridity may be helpful in

understanding new cultural identities that are emerging in the transnational cultural spaces, like youth culture constructed around popular music forms such as ‘hip-hop’ (Gilroy, 1993: 33ff). The sense of hybridity being in the vanguard of cultural development, the creation of something new, is also implied by Brah’s reference to diasporas as the sites of new beginnings – of new creative possibilities.

In this study the concept of hybridity is considered useful for understanding and explaining the processes of synthesis, of change by fusion, mixing and negotiations amongst Ghanaians in the shared cultural spaces of London; the cross-fertilization of ideas, values, knowledge and institutions. The concept is also helpful in exploring the complex details of culture-sympathy/culture-clash at the junction of the cultural assemblages occupied by Ghanaian-Londoners, and the instances of mutation being produced.

2.6: Conclusion:

Modern diasporic formations stand out as exemplary evolving communities in the midst of global flows. While some consider diasporas as an aberration on the pattern of the global nation-state system, they provoke a rethinking of established orders and the possibilities of transcending their shortcomings. The juxtaposition of cultures and the cultural intermixing and transfusions concomitant with diasporic formations, may be better understood through the use of biological concepts such as hybridity and cross-fertilisation. However, attention is also drawn to the dominance of hegemonic orders and the denuding of the less dominant cultures in the mixing processes. But the hegemonies are not immune to change, and terms such as ‘reverse flows’ and ‘hybridisation’ emphasise the multi-dimensionality of the processes of change. The comprehension of these processes and their consequences affords this study, useful instruments for conceptualising the Ghanaian diaspora and comprehending the processes of transformation in which its subjects are caught up.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Outline:

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- 3.2 Documenting culture, conceptualising the audience
- 3.3 Method selection – the qualitative approach
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 - 3.6.1 Analysing text
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3.0: Introduction:

This research proceeded against a backdrop of pendulum shifts in communication research from the direct effects tradition that suggested omnipotence of the media, to audience-centred approaches that emphasised audience autonomy and supremacy. These debates consequently generated recognition of power issues in media production and transmission as well as the creative capacity of media audiences to draw on their own resources and frameworks of knowledge and experience in their appropriation and processing of media products.

3.1: Media/ audience research – a brief overview:

‘The entire study of mass communications is based on the premise that the media have significant effects... with little agreement on the nature of these assumed effects’ (McQuail 1994: 327). The pendulum has swung between media omnipotence and

total audience autonomy and supremacy. The once dominant, totalistic, direct effects tradition assumed the media to be omnipotent and regarded audiences as passive receptacles of media messages. This has been variously referred to as the “magic bullet theory”, the “hypodermic needle theory” and the “transmission belt theory” – the idea being that media messages are uniformly received by every member of the audience and act as stimuli that trigger immediate and direct responses (DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach, 1989: 162). But this view has been criticised for regarding audiences as monolithic and not recognizing the diversity of audience readings or resistance to media texts. The importance of social contexts of media consumption and of the survival of social structures which mediated the relationship between the individual and the state was also not taken into account (Boyd-Barrett, 1995: 69).

Audience centred approaches move the debate to the other end of the spectrum. They affirm the autonomy and choice of the audiences, portraying them not as victims but as creative users of media content. Their emphasis was on what people do with the media rather than what the media do to people. It is now recognised that the differing predispositions people brought to texts generated different understandings – that individuals were not passive receivers of communication (Morley 1992: 78-9; Curran, 2002: 116). This ought not to be taken to imply that the media are benign or impotent.

In a contribution that incorporated these alternative perspectives, Hall (1973) developed a model which differentiated between three hypothetical positions from which television text might be decoded: the ‘*dominant*’, ‘*negotiated*’, and ‘*oppositional*’ codes. This model shows how via the media, as an institutionalised cultural production system, ‘*preferred meanings*’ which tend to support prevailing economic, political and social power relations¹, are *encoded* into the structure of texts, and how these were negotiated or rejected at the consumption end of the spectrum by audiences. This model was adopted and adapted by Morley in his Nationwide Audience research which found that meaning was constructed through the interaction of text and the social and discourse positions of audiences (1980: 18-21, 134-147).

¹ It has been argued that the social production and reproduction of meaning involved in the cultural process is a matter of signification as much as it is a matter of power (see Grossberg, 1983: 46). Cultural processes become ideological when meaning production coincides with the interests of the dominant or powerful sections of society. This is in line with the Gramscian concept of hegemony which points to the leadership of the dominant classes in the production of generalized meanings and of consent to the prevailing arrangement of social relations.

Morley's work challenged previous assumptions that audiences responded in prescribed ways to fixed pre-constituted meanings in texts. It demonstrates that intervening variables that mediate various understandings include the structure of the text, the social context in which it is read, the culture of the reader, and the ways in which predispositions, reading competencies, likes and dislikes and opportunities are influenced by cultural factors (Boyd-Barrett, 1995: 499). Other studies following in this tradition include Radway's *Reading the Romance* (1984) and Ang's *Watching Dallas* (1985). Regarding media audiences, Hall points out:

‘We are all in our heads, several different audiences at once, and can be constituted as such by different programmes. We have the capacity to deploy different levels and modes of attention, to mobilise different competencies in our viewing. At different times of the day, for different family members, different patterns of viewing have different ‘saliencies’. Here the monolithic conceptions of the viewer, the audience or of television itself have been displaced ... before the new emphasis on difference and variation’ (Hall 1986a: 10)

This demonstration of audience plurality and selective behaviours countered neo-Marxian derivatives which focussed on ideological reinforcements on a supposedly homogeneous (monolithic) audience.

Against this background, this study takes into account the fact that television texts are embedded with ideological and other messages. It considers and assesses the interpretative frameworks and creativity that the subjects, as media audiences, brought to the appropriation (decoding) of such texts.

3.2: Documenting culture, conceptualising the audience:

‘Cultures do not hold still for portraits’, cautions James Clifford (1986: 10), a reminder about the problematic of documenting dynamic cultural phenomena, even though anthropologists have over the years treated ‘cultures’ as meaningful wholes rather than entities that are never finished. Ethnographic descriptions face the challenge posed by the elusiveness of ‘live’ culture. Such descriptions are considered as particular ways of seeing, organising, and making sense of an elusive reality. Culture documenting is therefore considered as discursive construction. This leads Ang to declare that after all the careful data gathering and careful inference making:

Portraying a ‘culture’ implies the discursive knocking-up of a unitary picture out of bits and pieces of carefully selected and combined observations, a picture that makes sense within the framework of a set of preconceived

problematics and sensitising concepts which the researcher employs as cognitive and linguistic tools to make the descriptions ... Any cultural description is not only constructive, but also of a provisional nature – creating the discursive objectification and sedimentation of culture through the singling out and highlighting of a series of discontinuous occurrences from an ongoing, never-ending flux, and therefore ... always-already falling short and falling behind (Ang, 1996: 75).

Moreover, the attempt to isolate and document any particular culture is further complicated by the complex and entangled maze of social and cultural practices, proliferating in time and taking place in global space. With the interconnectedness between all cultures and people simultaneously engaged in many cultural practices at once and constantly on the move, it is impossible to imagine a comprehensive portrait of any cultural formation.

Audience research is likewise said to be confronted with what Diamond (1993) refers to as the intransigence of audience chaos, a reference to the heterogeneous and dispersed audience practices and experiences, and questions about how to define or construct the audience. Again Ang suggests that concepts that have guided audience research, were attempts to make media audiencehood manageable and that terms such as '*readings*', '*uses*', '*gratifications*', '*decodings*', '*effects*' '*negotiations*', '*interpretive communities*', or '*symbolic resistance*', are discursive devices used to confer some kind of order and coherence to the chaotic outlook of this empirical landscape. She also contends that just as Wagner (1981) regarded representations of 'culture' as inventions of anthropologists, so too are representations of 'audience' invented by audience researchers in the sense that it is only in and through the descriptions conjured within the discourses produced by researchers that certain profiles of certain audiences take shape – profiles that are in effect created by the descriptions and do not exist outside of them (Ang, 1996: 77).

Such arguments are difficult to refute. However, critiques of ethnographic knowledge production and the suggestion of epistemological imperfection should not disable or dissuade enquiry into cultural formations. The view that the hermeneutic ambition of ethnographic discourse is to provide representations that allow a better understanding of other people as well as our own lives is still useful. Besides, Talal Asad (cited in Ang, 1996: 76) urges that cultural inscriptions should have a political purpose as

modalities for political intervention. Authorship, with its mandatory requirements of accuracy and transparency, thus takes on the additional responsibility of political relevance. It is in this vein that this portrait of the Ghanaian presence in London, as a documentary that contributes to their visibility, is positioned within political discourses of power and empowerment amidst their struggles within dominant structures and hegemonic systems.

3.3: Method selection – the qualitative approach:¹ The goals of this enquiry called for a selection of suitable methods informed by current perspectives, tried and tested methodological approaches, concepts, and models of research. It takes a cue from Flick's advise that the research design ought to consider the appropriateness of methods and theories, perspectives of the participants and their diversity, and reflexivity of the researcher and the research (1999: 5-7).

For this study a mainly qualitative approach was deemed ideal for data gathering as the object was an in-depth meaning exploration and discovery.² The flexibility of the qualitative approach allows a deep probe of the protean areas of interest (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006: 49). Detail takes precedence over scope in the focus of qualitative research designs (Silverman 2005: 9). Besides, Denzin and Lincoln state:

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape the inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. In contrast, quantitative studies emphasise the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not process (2000: 8).

¹ Across the philosophical divide, quantitative approaches, favoured by naturalists, and qualitative approaches, preferred by interpretivists, are respectively governed by competing philosophies of scientific 'idealism' and social 'realism' (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). Interpretivists disagree with the naturalists' argument that 'the methods of natural science are models for social science' and insist on the meaningfulness of social life and the irrelevance of natural scientists' mode of analysis and explanation (Lazar, 2004: 8). This suggests that the approach to social knowledge is polarised around *induction* and *deduction* (Seale, 1999: 23). Advocating a detachment from philosophical conceptual divisions, Seale suggests that philosophical positions can be understood as resources for thinking and hence social researchers could draw on both *induction* and *deduction* approaches, (realism and idealism) when conducting research (ibid: 25, 27). Method selection is therefore about utilising the most suitable tools for data collection on a particular project. This served as a guiding principle for choosing the appropriate methods for this study.

² In a critique of the conceptual and practical limits of quantitative research methods Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (1996: 9) point out that since people's behaviour is not caused in a mechanical way, it is not amenable to the sort of casual analysis and manipulation of variable positivism and that there are many different layers or circles of cultural knowledge within any society.

The main problem with the qualitative method is *subjectivity* - the likelihood of the researcher injecting his or her personal views into the inquiry. It is argued that because a person doing qualitative research must become closely involved with the respondents, it is possible to lose objectivity when collecting data (Wimmer and Dominick 2006: 49). The goal of objectivity requires the study to be designed in such a way that the researcher's influence is excluded as far as possible, and the subjective views of the researcher and the subjects under study are largely eliminated (Flick, 1999: 3). This served as a guiding principle for the design of this research.

Qualitative research is confronted by issues of *validity*, (also reliability and replicability). Unlike quantitative approaches, replication of studies is difficult to achieve in qualitative studies because the latter deal with unique dynamic settings where change over time makes revisits problematic. The more realistic alternative advocated, and adopted for this study, is a reflexive account of procedures and methods detailing the lines of enquiry leading to particular conclusions, and ensuring that claims are supported by adequate evidence, always open to the possibility that conclusions may need to be revised in the light of new evidence (see Searle, 1999: x, 157). Moreover, Hammersley argues for 'subtle realism', the suggestion that the validity of knowledge cannot be assessed with certainty, and that assumptions can only be judged for their plausibility and credibility. Besides, our assumptions can only approximate to the phenomena, and that research aims at presenting reality not reproducing it (Flick, 1999: 225). The quest for validity in qualitative research therefore places a premium on how far the researcher's constructions are grounded in the constructions of those studied, and how transparent this is (ibid). This has been the ambition of this study. Furthermore, in order to confront '*anecdotalism*' - which is a critique of claims made on the basis of a few chosen examples - the effort was made at a critical examination of all data, the typicality or representativeness of their occurrence,¹ as well as the presentation of deviant cases that defy the trend.

3.4: Utilising ethnographic techniques:

According to Bryman ethnography 'is distinguished by its objectives, which are to understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given "field" or setting,

¹ Given the requirement for word-economy, it was not always feasible to demonstrate this by presenting many more statements collected that corroborated a certain perspective.

and its approach, which involves close association with, and often participation in, this setting' (2000: 11). It involves observing behaviour and working closely with informants, and is useful in understanding people's actions and their experiences of the world, and in accessing social meanings. Several methods of data collection tend to be used in ethnography, including in-depth interviewing, participant observation, documents and discourse analysis of natural language (Bryman 2000: 11, 20). This study was informed and affirmed by Bryman's three dimensions of ethnography: 'the belief that fragments of recorded talk, extracts from field notes and reports of observed actions can reliably represent a social world' (Bryman 2000: 53).

Nina Huntemann and Michael Morgan also assume that ethnographic methods such as one-to-one interviews and participant observation can provide thick descriptions of daily life, allowing for the messy and complex connections between identity and culture (2001:316). The applicability of ethnographic methods to the study of media audiences – to television viewing within the normative contexts of everyday family life, and the methodological flexibility it afforded researchers in a natural setting, were previously noted by James Lull (1990: 22). Ethnography therefore offered the best means of exploring the situated and mediated experiences of Ghanaians in London.

3.4.1: Sampling (technique & scale): The purposive sampling technique was utilized. This method of sampling seeks out groups, settings and individuals, where the processes being studied are most likely to occur (Denizen and Lincoln, 2000: 370). Participants were drawn from the Ghanaian community in London, using the snowball technique and thereby enlarging the sample until an optimum size was reached. For the purposes of this research the optimum scale of the sample was gauged and later revised. The scale of the sample was determined by considerations that included the time frame of the project, the resources of the researcher, and the realities encountered during fieldwork. Bryman suggests that the scale of samples in ethnographic studies tends to be small because this method is used in order to examine micro events in everyday life which feature within the broader social world (Bryman, 2000: 53). For this study too large a sample would have been unwieldy and resulted in data over-load.

3.4.2: The researcher as a participant observer:

Flick (2002: 140) suggests two forms of observation: *specific* observation which is more focused, and *non-specific* observation, which is general and non-descriptive. Denzin and Lincoln argue that the colonial concept of the subject (as the object of the observer's gaze) is no longer applicable and observers now function as collaborative participants in action inquiry settings (ibid).¹ 'All observation involves participation in the world being studied. There is no pure, objective, detached observation; the effects of the observer's presence can never be erased' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 643).

As a researcher and a participant-observer, being a Ghanaian resident in Britain brought certain advantages to the study, apart from ready access to the subjects. It afforded the close-up view of an insider and a good understanding of the subjects, as well as a level of insider-knowledge equivalent to the requisite 'immersion' critical to ethnographic exploration which, considering the time restrictions on this project, was significant. The ability to communicate in certain Ghanaian languages and English, and to translate responses, was important, as meaning was often better communicated by most first generation interviewees in their native tongue. For the younger subjects English was the first language. There was the additional privilege of first-hand 'backstage' conversation in which more candid views about outgroups were expressed; opinions that may not have been disclosed in the presence of others.

However, prior familiarity with the object of study was potentially a two-edged sword – an advantage as well as a potential bane. There was the need to guard against the possibility that such familiarity could potentially induce a laissez-faire attitude that glosses over the significance of phenomena which would otherwise have commanded the curiosity and closer scrutiny of a stranger. The anthropologists' injunction to 'render the familiar strange' was a useful guiding principle in this regard. Critical distance was therefore applied to the object of the enquiry. Ghanaian social activities in London, including celebrations and life-cycle ceremonies were observed with a fresh focus and a measure of detachment helpful to the role of a participant observer.

¹ They also employ the arguments of Angrosino and Perez suggesting that observational interaction is a tentative situational process shaped by shifts in gendered identity and by existing structures of power, and that during the observational process people assume situational identities that might not be socially or culturally normative (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 643)

Observation in this case was usually covert¹ and opportunistic – as and when social occasions occurred. The observations were occasionally complemented with photographs. Observation sites included Ghanaian shops, restaurants, churches, homes, and social gatherings in London. Notice was taken of ordinary practices such as the conduct of meetings and the mixing of languages, foods, and music at events. Prior experience of living in Ghana acquainted the researcher with the way certain ceremonies were performed in the homeland making it possible to observe differences with the London versions of the same ceremonies and to examine the reasons for the variations as factors of their diasporic status. This ability to observe and compare processes of change in Ghanaian cultural practices provided an opportunity to present lived culture as a dynamic process rather than ‘frozen in time’. Besides, comparisons could be made with the dominant British/ Western culture in which the subjects were embedded, and attempts could be made to trace the sources of influences that factored into changing trends in Ghanaian culture in London.

As a postscript, the relationship with the subject families endured beyond the period of active fieldwork. Sadly, a parent in one of the families studied, passed away towards the end of the project and was interred in London. The Ghanaian-style funeral combined with the services of white British undertakers² epitomised the merger of two systems of life-cycle observances. Such incidences of passing occasioned a poignant reflection on the tendency of diasporans to assume that their sojourn abroad would be temporary, as home, often thought of as the place of origin, beckoned, offering the prospect of eventual return and final rest. Unfortunately, in this case, it was not to be, and the place of sojourn, as in many cases, becomes the final resting place.

3.5: The Research Process

3.5.1: Working with family / households units:³

¹ This was a preferred approach as it enhanced the chances of apprehending phenomena in their naturally occurring conditions where the awareness by subjects that they were being observed could influence their performance. Besides, it satisfied the requirement for ethical propriety as these were public events.

² In Ghana this would have been undertaken by the family of the deceased rather than strangers.

³ The term ‘family’ is used in this study to refer to the nuclear family unit as well as the forms of extended family relations dwelling in the same house as encountered among the Ghanaian subjects. The term ‘household’ is therefore used in conjunction with ‘family’ to express this more flexible notion of ‘family’. Profiles of the various family units/ households are provided in Appendix ‘A’ (pg. 337)

The study focused on Ghanaian family/ household audiences as an empirical starting point, treating them as sense-making cultural formations but cognisant of critical scholarship that problematised the notion of media audiences and how they were constructed. The challenge involved in this exercise was understood as an endeavour to capture fleeting cultural moments in what Janice Radway described as ‘the endlessly shifting, ever evolving kaleidoscope of daily life and the way in which the media are integrated and implicated within it (1988: 366). The family unit/ household was ideal for this purpose for many reasons, not least because it provided a self-contained, ready context in which media consumption, cultural practices, and inter-generational differences and negotiations could be observed in their spontaneity.

Recruitment of family/ household units began in September of 2005 through acquaintances and contacts made among Ghanaians in churches and at social events. The number of participating families gradually snowballed from September of 2005 and by October 2006 nine randomly recruited families were involved in the study. Other families which participated in interviews at a later stage raised the total number of families to twelve.

Visits to the families/ households were arranged at the subjects’ convenience – usually in the evenings. Uniformity in the manner of visits across the families was unattainable given the differences in the schedules of the various families.

- Of the nine participating families/ households, there was a greater than average degree of involvement with the *Black Horse Road Family* and the *Streatham Hill Family*. In each case there were over ten visits as well as involvement in their many other social engagements.
- The *Olive Grove family/ household* was visited seven times.
- The *White Hart Lane family* and the *Walworth family* were each visited six times.
- The *Streatham Vale family* and the *Tottenham Green family/ household* were visited five times each
- The *Enfield family* was visited four times. Eventually the family relocated outside London and contact became difficult.
- The *Harlesden family* was visited three times but dropped out of the programme.
- The other families which participated only in interviews included the *Tooting Broadway Family*, the *Thornton Heath Family* and the *Old Kent Road Family*.

The exercise was time-intensive. Each family visit lasted about two and half hours, some not as productive as anticipated. On each visit their TV viewing practices and choices were observed and recorded at the end of the visit. The researcher participated in some of social activities with some of the families. Such occasions usually took the better part of a whole day. These included visits to leisure and amusement centres, weddings, birthday celebrations, out-of-town trips and other social occasions. The neighbourhoods in which the families resided were of interest and questions about their relations with neighbours were included in interviews. As homes were visited notice was taken of the living room arrangements, stacks of DVD, VHS, and book collections, interior decorations, particularly art work displayed on walls and mantels in living rooms (see photographs in chapter six). These represented the aesthetic tastes of families or parents, and included what they valued most – family photographs, faith symbols and sculptures brought from Ghana. Also noted was the position of the television vis-à-vis the furniture and sitting arrangements, which usually also reflected the central position and place of the TV as a medium of cultural consumption. Attention was also paid to family dynamics around TV viewing; how power was negotiated around viewing schedules usually involving the remote control, and whether gender, seniority or mere assertive personalities were the basis for any assertion of control. In most families this turned out not to be an issue.

As the family visits progressed, certain challenging realities emerged. Not all visits were productive. The ideal situation of a whole family being present for the entire duration of a visit proved unattainable. The reality was that the families were naturally dynamic; individuals were mobile and had different schedules, choices, and priorities. It was rare to have a whole family together for any considerable length of time. Moreover multiple television sets within homes fragmented family viewing and posed a challenge to the purpose of the observation of the family as a unit; observation of the group dynamic, what they watched and how they negotiated group viewing, became difficult. Motives for channel selection were not always obvious. In all probability the presence of the researcher may have influenced programme selection as they sometimes selected programmes that would keep a guest entertained. This raised the possibility of distortion of the actual viewing practices that took place. Another challenge was the fact that since visits could only take place at convenient times and were far-between, it was impossible to observe round the clock programme

selection. A visit only provided the occasional glimpse which was not wholly representative of the overall pattern of consumption.

Adjustments to the research process were made to address the challenges that emerged in the 'field'. The sample was boosted with further recruitments of three additional families – The *Tooting Broadway family*, the *Old Kent Road family*, and the *Thornton Heath family* from South London. Five more adult recruits (all of whom were parents) from five different families participated as individuals because their families could not take part in the study. This supplementary recruitment was for interview purposes only rather than observational visits. It was to make up for dropouts, shortfalls, disparities and inconsistencies in the make-up and uneven productiveness of the nine named families recruited earlier. It was hoped that ultimately the sample would be fairly representative of gender and generation and adequately produce reflections from the perspectives of fathers, mothers, and children respectively. Such sample alteration or adjustment in the course of a piece of research is a recognised and accepted practice:

Theoretical or purposive sampling is a set of procedures where the researcher manipulates their analysis, theory, and sampling activities *interactively* during the research process to a much greater extent than in statistical sampling (Mason, quoted in Silverman, 2005: 133)

This fine-tuning was also a product of the requisite reflexivity that was applied to the entire research process and of the researcher's role within it.

Another adjustment was the introduction of television viewing *diaries*. The diaries were distributed to all the households to make up for what visits alone could not cover. The subjects were encouraged to record the programmes they watched, when, and with whom, over a period of about four months. But for many the keeping of diaries was a challenge and they were inconsistent in the practice. Disparities therefore emerged in the degrees to which diaries were kept across and within the different families. Some diaries were misplaced or not kept, as was the case with the *Tottenham Green family* and the *Harlesden family*. Diaries retrieved from the other families were analysed and despite the inconsistencies in the diary-keeping, patterns of TV viewing emerged in addition to observations made during visits:

- Sitcoms emerged as the overwhelming favourite of most young people and these were predominantly 'Black' American programmes.
- Cartoons were also popular with children
- Variety entertainment and reality programmes such as *X-Factor* were popular
- Sports programmes, particularly football, featured prominently in the viewing schedules of most of the male participants. But females also showed some interest in certain football matches, but not so much in boxing or wrestling.
- Soap dramas were very popular, not just with mothers, but also with many youngsters. *EastEnders* and *Coronation Street* were the most watched soaps.
- News programmes were watched mostly by adults. Most young people did not focus on the news but were aware of some major news events.
- The Original Black Entertainment Television (OBE TV) channel which had significant Ghanaian programme content, was popular. Nigerian films were also very popular and were available on OBE TV as well as on DVD and VHS collections in some homes.
- Films also featured in the listings, though less prominently

This picture was taken into account in designing the in-depth interview phase of the study. The interviews were informed by, but not confined to listed programmes in the diaries. In the course of fieldwork a review of the incoming data identified emergent themes relevant to the research questions. These provisional themes regarding

Ghanaian-Londoners included:

- Strategic identifications
- Television and Ghanaian identity
- Media consumption and youth identities
- Ambiguities and ambivalences in dual national identities
- Television's use for empowerment and community action
- Television viewing and consumption culture
- News consumption and related issues
- Nostalgic uses of television
- Ideological messages from media consumption
- Integration of popular music and Ghanaian musical genres
- Intergenerational transmission of values
- Some distinctive Ghanaian traditions

3.5.2: Interviews¹ - applying the semi-structured interview method

The emergent themes guided the development and focusing of the *interview schedule*, made up of key questions to guide further exploration. Structure was combined with loose parameters for flexibility. While the guide helped to maintain the focus of the inquiry, it was possible to raise open-ended questions, probe answers further where necessary, and gain better access to interviewees' understandings, experiences, views, and interpretation of events.² As Flick points out, the consistent use of the interview guide designed for semi-structured interviews, increases the comparability of data (1999: 95). The goal of semi-structured interview in general, it is affirmed, is to reveal existing knowledge in a way that can be expressed in the form of answers and so

¹ **Interviewing** is useful for generating empirical data about the social world (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 113). It involves apt questioning but also meanings being actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. For interviews in the interactionist tradition, interview subjects construct not just narratives, but social worlds. For researchers in this tradition, the primary issue is to generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences (Silverman, 1993: 91). Interviewers are therefore said to be deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within respondents (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 114).

The interview is therefore not a neutral tool because at least two people create the reality of the interview situation. It produces 'situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes' and is 'influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including, race, class, ethnicity, and gender' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 643).

Researchers are therefore cautioned about *variables* which can affect research outcomes. These include location of interview, the form of questioning, who is being interviewed, and who is doing the interviewing (Byrne, 2004: 180). Dealing with such variables involves being flexible, creative, and adapting to ever changing interview situations (Fontana and Frey, 2003: 80). Besides, the interviewer needs to be objective, empathic, persuasive, and a good listener (Fontana and Frey, 1994: 365).

* Bell observed that body language (facial expressions, posture etc) could add meaning to responses and 'can provide information that a written response could conceal' (Bell, 1999: 135). As a researcher, my understanding of Ghanaian languages and familiarity with their body language (gestures, exclamations, facial expressions etc) stood me in good stead as an instrument in the meaning gathering endeavour that the interviews represented.

Moreover, advice is also offered on how unforeseen factors or human weaknesses could influence responses, and lead to interview bias, such as eagerness of the respondents to please the interviewer, a vague antagonism that sometimes arises between interviewer and respondent, or the tendency of the interviewer to seek out the answers that support his preconceived notions (Borg cited in Bell, 1999:139). These considerations and cautions were taken into account as interviews were conducted.

*There were instances where interviewees tried to reverse roles by interrogating the researcher, or appeared defensive as they were questioned. On occasion when I felt that interviewees were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear when questioned on their allegiances and sense of belonging for instance, I cross-referenced their answers with other statements that they had made in response to other questions and probed them further or made deductions accordingly. One such occasion was when the teenagers in the Olive Grove Family claimed to be 100% Ghanaian and seemed to reject their British identity. However they had indicated that if they were sent to live in Ghana against their will, they would go to the British High Commission in Ghana to report that they were British but were being held against their will in Ghana.

² The interview guide was utilised with some flexibility rather than too bureaucratically or too rigidly. During interviews the researcher avoided interrupting interviewees as they gave their accounts but afterwards returned to any points made that needed further probing. Similarly in group interviews the exchange of arguments was given as free a scope as possible without undue interruption.

become accessible to interpretation (Flick 1999: 87). The semi-structured method was chosen for this study also because it allows sensitivity to contextual variations and enables the achievement of depth and complexity, and is suitable for dealing with issues such as values and understanding, unlike the inflexible structured method which is guided by a strict interview schedule (Bloch, 2004: 165; Byrne, 2004: 181-2).

Interviews with parents were conducted separately from those conducted with their children for various reasons, including the difficulty of having an entire family together for any length of time and the convenience it afforded both parents and children. Separate interviewing allowed more time per session and greater depth and scope of the interviewing, among other considerations.

3.5.3: Group interviews:¹

Group interviewing of young people of Ghanaian parentage was built into the research design. It was envisaged that this would elicit views from a broader base and wider children's perspectives than the family units offered. They would also compensate for children in the family units who were too young to sufficiently articulate young people's perceptions and perspectives. It was considered that the group interviews would provide the young participants with an environment in which they would be uninhibited in the expression of their views and experiences. Teenagers between the ages of 15 and 20 were recruited through their friends in the family study and other friendship networks. Three group interviews of eight participants each were completed in North and West London respectively. These were additional to interviews of young people conducted in their family homes which were usually done with siblings interacting and bringing a semblance of the group dynamic to the interviews. All interviews were tape recorded, labelled and transcribed.

3.5.4: Architectural considerations: The study took account of the impact of spatial architecture on the subjects. Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont in an article (in Denzin

¹ The group interview is thought to further contextualise the data collected and to create an interactional situation that comes closer to everyday life than the encounter of interviewer and narrator permits (Flick, 1999: 114). The method is considered a highly efficient qualitative data-collection technique with some inherent quality controls in the tendency of participants providing checks and balances on each other, apart from the ease of assessing consistent, shared views among participants (Patton cited in Flick 1999: 115). It generates rich data quickly and the group dynamic brings other benefits such as stimulating answerers and jogging memories of participants.

and Lincoln, 2005: 827), cite various studies that draw attention to the significance of ethno-architecture in defining the spaces and styles of everyday living; the symbolic and physical boundaries provided by built spaces; the home as endowed with emotional and cultural value through the expression of taste and cultural capital, the celebration of historical authenticity, or the observance of modern minimalism; public spaces embodying cultural assumptions about the classification and processing of people and things, about commercial and professional transactions, about political processes and citizenship. They point out that analytic perspectives on ethnographic accounts of everyday life should be utilised for the construction of multilayered accounts of the social world. One of the objectives of this study was the exploration of the consequences of architecture on the subjects and how they adapted to the built environment.¹

3.5.5: Photographic documentation:

Photographs and films are especially important both as data and as an instrument of knowledge (Flick, 1999: 151)². The image is a record of real-world, real-time actions and events. Photographic data has several advantages: A picture is said to be worth a thousand words. Unlike quantitative methods which condense data in figures, qualitative approaches tend to require a bigger volume of text to explicate data. Photographs become useful in data condensation. Besides it is recognised that photographs are incorruptible in terms of their perception and documentation of phenomena. However, they are not unproblematic, and as Peter Loizos argues, they are never more than representations or traces of more complex past actions – secondary, derived and reduced, scale simplifications of reality (in Bauer and Gaskell (eds.), 2003: 94). Besides, human agency factors into photographic documentation, analysis and presentation. In a discussion of the methodological questions around the use of photographs, Denzin (cited in Flick, 1999: 152-153) suggests among other

¹ This is addressed in the first half of chapter six where the observations on the implications of architecture are cited and discussed.

² In a summary of the main purpose of using cameras in social research Mead suggests that:

- They allow detailed recordings of facts and provide a more comprehensive and holistic presentation of lifestyles and conditions;
- They allow the transportation of artefacts and the presentation of them as pictures, and also the transgression of borders;
- They can catch facts and processes that are too fast or too complex for the human eye;
- Cameras are non reactive recordings of observations, and are less selective than observations, and also that photographs are available for reanalysis by others (cited in Flick, 1999: 152)

things that theoretical presumptions which determine what is photographed and when, which feature is selected from the photograph for analysis, leave their mark on photographs as data. And while they tell the truth as it is, photographs transform the world they represent into a specific shape and may also be marked by the interpretations and ascriptions of those who take or regard them. Such observations and the fact that photographs can be perceived variously, suggest that an objectivist view of the photograph as an unambiguous record is naïve.

In this study photographs are used as complementary data¹ to aid description of the Ghanaian presence in England in chapter six. There are valid arguments about reactivity produced by the very act of taking the photographs, of subjects posing for shots rather than being ‘captured’ or snapped in their spontaneity, and of framing – what the operator focuses on; what is in the picture and what is left out. Such considerations raise questions about the extent to which the samples of reality presented in pictures are affected by bias. These are questions that confront qualitative methods in general - authorial constructions (including the use of pictures) being inevitably implicated in the presentation of reality. Such work is both empirical and constructed. The instruments employed in the endeavour, whether technical or human, are unavoidably affected by some element of subjectivity. There is no perfect apprehension of reality. But the ambition of this study has been the elimination of the researcher’s influence or intervention. To that extent the self-narration by the subjects, and photographs as visual descriptions, are meant to tell their own story as much as possible. The use of photographs may hence be considered as part of the interpretive procedures utilised in this study, in this case transforming and translating visual material into analysable text.

3.6: Analytical procedures:

Miles and Huberman suggest three concurrent flows of activity in data analysis: data reduction, data display and conclusion/ verification. By *data reduction* (or data condensation) they refer to the process of selecting, focussing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming data. *Data display*, according to them, is an organised

¹ Attention is drawn by critics such as Denzin, cited by Flick (1999) to the possibility of influencing or manipulating photographic presentation through montage, retouching, airbrushing etc. which undermine their reliability. In this case, no attempt was made to doctor the pictures used or manipulate their presentation.

assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking. *Conclusion drawing* involves decisions about what things mean, noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows and propositions, while *verification* means testing the provisional conclusions for their plausibility, sturdiness, “confirmability” (i.e. validity) Miles and Huberman (1994: 10-11). These broadly informed the approach to data processing in this study. Analysis of the data was approached as a pervasive activity throughout the project as suggested by Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 10-11). This meant examining the data throughout the various stages of the research process. This was also part of the reflexivity by which the data gathering procedures were fine-tuned. From the data processing the main themes were considered and developed into chapters. These included news issues, soaps and serials, African drama, culture and identity issues.

3.6.1: Analysing text

*Discourse Analysis*¹, provided conceptual tools for analysing the material generated in this study. The term ‘discourse’ is said to refer to all forms of talk and texts including naturally occurring conversations, interview material and written texts (Gill, 2003: 187). Fairclough also suggests that discourse is constituted by a complex of three elements: *text* as spoken or written language, *discourse practice* which includes text production, distribution, interpretation, and consumption, and *social practice*, the political dimension of text involving relations of power and domination. Analysis of a specific discourse, according to him, should involve analysis of each of these three dimensions and their interrelations (Fairclough, 1997: 74, 133, 211).

A common conviction in discourse analysis is that language is not a neutral means of describing the world. It is both *constructive* and *constructed*. This means discourse is built out of pre-existing linguistic resources², and is of central importance in the construction of social life. Text is constructed out of texts from the past and meanings depend on other meanings. This constitution of text by a combination of diverse

¹Rosalind Gill suggests four main themes of discourse analysis: a concern with discourse itself; a view of language as constructive and constructed; an emphasis on discourse as a form of action; and a conviction in the rhetorical organisation of discourse (Gill, 2003:174-5)

² ‘Language and linguistic practices offer a sediment of systems of terms, narrative forms, metaphors and commonplaces from which a particular account may be assembled’ (Potter et al., quoted in Bauer and Gaskell, (eds.) 2003: 175).

genres and discourses is referred to as *intertextuality*¹, which Kristeva suggests implies the ‘insertion of history (society) into a text and this text into history’ (quoted in Fairclough, 1997:189). Intertextual analysis brings into focus the social resources and experiences that are drawn upon in the reception and interpretation of media (Fairclough, 1997: 200). It also encapsulates the concept of media and social capital acquired through familiarity with media texts and social experience.

Furthermore, discourse² or language use is also constitutive of social identities, social relations, and ideology³ (Fairclough, 1997: 131). Drawing on Foucault’s ideas of power and on Althusserian and Gramscian conceptions regarding the structuring of subjects by diverse ideologies, Fairclough reiterates that ideology is the key means through which social relations of power and domination are sustained and reproduced (Fairclough, 1997:136). Critical discourse analysis examines the links between texts and such social processes (ideologies and power relations/ hegemonies)⁴ (Ibid: 97).

Such perceptions informed the analytical approach adopted for reading the textual data produced in this study. The analysis took account of the interrelationships of language with its social context. The approach to interpretation involved a creative⁵

¹ **Intertextuality** refers to the interconnection and interrelationships that a particular popular cultural text has with other texts in its context of production. This includes inherited values, traditions and meanings from other social and cultural contexts.

* Intertextual analysis, Fairclough points out, offers reception studies a textual basis for answering questions about what social resources and experiences that are drawn upon in the reception and interpretation of media and what other domains of life media messages are linked to or assimilated to in interpretation (Fairclough, 1997: 200)

² Johnstone (2008: 10) on the nature of **discourse**, points out that:

- Discourse is shaped by the world, and discourse shapes the world.
- Discourse is shaped by language, and discourse shapes language.
- Discourse is shaped by participants, and discourse shapes participants.
- Discourse is shaped by prior discourse, and discourse shapes the possibilities for future discourse
- Discourse is shaped by its medium, and discourse shapes the possibilities of its medium.
- Discourse is shaped by purpose, and discourse shapes purpose

³ **Ideology**: Systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough, 1997: 131).

- Language is a material form of ideology, and is invested by ideology (Fairclough, 1997: 73).
- Ideology is also understood as ‘world views’ of any social groups which justify their actions and also as ‘forms of power/ knowledge used to justify the actions of persons or groups and which have specific consequences for relations of power. As such ideology is not to be counterposed to truth. (Barker and Galasinski, 2003: 25, 66). See glossary of terms in Appendix ‘D’.
- Ideologies are naturalised as ‘common sense’. Common sense is a depository (subject to constant restructuring) of the diverse effects of past and present ideological struggles (Fairclough, 1997 76).

⁴ **Hegemony** is leadership as well as domination across the economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of society (Fairclough, 1997: 97).

⁵ Rosalind Gill has drawn attention to the fact that discourse analysis is a craft skill (in Bauer and Gaskell (eds.) 2003: 180)

but systematic construction of meaning based on the text. Fairclough (1997) has observed that the interpretation process operates on 'cues' in the text. Attention was therefore paid to meaningful 'cues' and allusions inherent or implicit in the text. This was by close inspection guided by relevance to themes. These and related concepts were flagged up and analysed and both implicit and explicit meanings were identified and explored.

It is generally acknowledged that analysis is interpretative, and interpretations are open, dynamic and subject to change, and that there is no ultimately 'correct' interpretation of texts. Besides, reflexivity does not invalidate analyses (Barker and Galasinski, 2003: 64). Rosengren argues that the idea of 'correct' interpretation of a text does not arise but rather that one could make some 'reasonable interpretations of a text'. And the reasonableness depends on certain contextual claims which can be linguistic, logical, semantical or empirical'. Rosengren also makes reference to construction of 'chains of pro et contra arguments' based on the presupposition in semantics that the open structure of language or text always makes it possible to create new perspectives and new precisations of the text (Rosengren 1981: 29). Based on such premises the textual material was examined for explicit meanings emanating from the formal features of language and its everyday usage, as well as for extra-linguistic elements like power and ideology. Attention was paid to the hegemonic, popular, and other discourses that respondents engaged with, including patriarchal, feminist, or racial discourses, in society, and in the selected television genres such as news and soaps, and how they contested, countered, or accommodated prevailing ideologies.

3.7: Conclusion:

The methodological strategies adopted for this research were determined by the objective of capturing a representative frame of the Ghanaian presence in London, their structures of feeling, world views, and practices. The flexibility of the ethnographical approach allowed a reflexive exploration of the processes, contexts, and implications of cultural consumption and experience among the subjects.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BLACK DIASPORA

(A historical overview)

Outline:

- Introduction
- The 'Black Atlantic'
- Black culture in the New World, including continuities and survivals of African culture in the wider Black Diaspora
- Concepts of 'Home' (Homeland)
- Some consequences of racial subjugation
- Black Resistance and Cultural Movements
- Antipodal racial identity formation
- Colour symbolisms and significations
- Black identity:
- Black Identity in Britain
- Black Culture
- Reconfiguring (Redefining) 'Black Culture' in Britain
- Summary & Conclusion

4.0: Introduction:

This chapter takes a panoramic view of the Black Diaspora¹, the historical constitution of the black world, from its origins on the African continent to its

¹ There are approximately over 1.2 billion black people of African descent around the world (a billion of them in Africa alone), with over 200 million people of African ancestry in the Americas, in countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Columbia, Trinidad, Haiti, Surinam and many more, 38 million of them in the United States. Source: www.infoplease.com (Accessed 25-10-07)

The **diasporic** credentials of the African or Black Diaspora are widely recognised in discourses on the subject. Various features of the dispersal by choice and by coercion of Africans warrant the description of the scattered and diverse peoples and cultures of African origin in diasporic terms. There is the classic typology of a homeland (Africa) from where the dispersal originates, which in many ways has an enduring impact on the identities of its peoples abroad. Continuities and survivals of common African elements persist among its descendants abroad. Africa continues to play on the imagination of the generations of black people, particularly those whose ancestors were forcibly removed from the continent to various destinations in North and South America and Europe. The common origins and a common struggle against racial subjugation served as a basis for solidarity on which a Pan African movement and Pan-Black alliances were forged. Besides, the psychology and ideology of 'roots', the essence of which was alluded to in Alex Hailey's book aptly titled '*Roots*', continue to sustain and inspire a diasporic imagination in the black world. These and other related issues are further discussed in various parts of this chapter.

dispersal and consolidation in other parts of the world, its responses to the challenges of racial oppression and subjugation, and how the concepts of 'home' and Africa as the place of origin, played in the black imagination and politics.

The black diaspora encompasses the wider presence of peoples of African origin throughout the world; their conditions, movements, experiences, accomplishments, and the communities and cultures that they fostered; the historical interconnections and persistent continuities among people with physical and cultural features that can be assumed to be of African inheritance. The concept of the Black Diaspora also embodies colonisation, slavery and their consequences, migrations, dispersals, re-settlements, reconsolidation, commonalities, contrasts, changes, contradictions, unity in diversity and internal divisions and distinctiveness, and assertive political action.

The result of the dispersals is a mosaic of various black identities with specificities to different social and national contexts in which these identities were forged or reconstituted. It has been suggested that in the United States the caste system that followed on emancipation, racial discrimination and disadvantage, resulted in a distinct Negro social organisation which was once referred to as 'a nation within a nation', with discontent manifesting in various political movements (Irele, 1989: 266). In Brazil it is said that racial issues were unknown due to the favourable traditions that had been built up during the period of slavery, and the consequent unproblematic racial assimilation of the population. But there was 'aesthetic prejudice' against the black colour rather than racial prejudice against black people (Irele, 1989: 269). In Cuba Negro sub-culture had a preponderant influence on intellectual movements and was affirmed as integral to the Cuban national heritage. Africanisms in Cuba were worked into poetry, as was the use of the rhythms of Afro-Cuban music (Irele, 1989: 270).¹ The nature of the relationship with host societies therefore contributed to the distinctiveness of the various Black identities in the Diaspora.

¹ The anti-slavery tradition centred Cuban literary interests on the Negro which also fed into the Cuban independence struggle and the anti-slavery ideological position of Cuban revolutionaries, Jose Marti in particular. Negro sub-culture was affirmed as integral to the Cuban national heritage, eventually giving rise to *negrismo*, the Afro-Cuban school (1920-1940) (Irele, 1989: 270).

4.1: The 'Black Atlantic'

The 'Black Atlantic' was a major international system which linked and transformed various regions of the world, with worldwide socio-economic consequences, at the heart of which was forced removal of millions of Africans from their homelands and their resettlement in the Americas (Watson, 1989: 126, 164). Communities of black people emerged in all corners of the Atlantic world in the era of British slavery. Slaves are said to have infiltrated every area of economic and social life, from plantation midwives to carpenters, from Atlantic sailors to American frontier cowboys, and from fishermen in the West Indies to all other walks of life (Walvin, 2000: 104)

New unique societies were created in the Caribbean and North and South America. Societies created by the massive importation of enslaved people to cultivate commodities for export to distant European markets rather than local consumption, was unprecedented, as was the racial stratification that characterised these societies. Plantation slavery was racial and ushered in a new categorisation of mankind. Racial definitions shaped society and status, rank and position, humanity and inhumanity (Walvin, 2000: 61). Indeed, racial categories and hierarchies were developed to cope with and justify the slave societies of the Americas (Watson, 1989: 166). Distinctive features of Africans such as physical markings, facial and body scars, which denoted ethnic or tribal origins, tended to be regarded by Europeans as signs of African primitiveness, and slave incomprehension of their masters' languages laid the basis for a pervasive belief in black stupidity. Thus slavery in various ways defined racial perceptions and consequently the relations between whites and blacks (Walvin, 2000: 68, 70).

Slavery had other consequences too. It has been suggested that many of the psychosocial issues facing the African-American community, such as the fratricide, the destruction of the family and teenage pregnancy originated aboard the first slave ship which landed in Jamestown Virginia in 1619 (Johnson, 1998: ix). While this may be an exaggeration, it symbolically, at least, draws attention to the enduring consequences of the traumas of slavery. Fanon observes that 'the disaster of the man of color lies in the fact that he was enslaved; the disaster and inhumanity of the white man lies in the fact that he has killed man' (Fanon, 1986: 231). Out of slavery emerged oppressed black people resenting the indignities of their condition and

expressing resistance in a variety of ways, and a resilient black character forged from the hardships and humiliations of racial oppression. The instruments of their struggle, its art forms and aspirations continue to influence the world's popular cultures and other socio-political struggles.

4.2: Black culture in the New World

4.2.1: *Continuities and survivals of African culture in the wider Diaspora:*

A vast array of African cultural elements was re-established throughout the black diaspora, including language, music, dance, cuisines, proverbs and sayings, religion, divination, taboos, witchcraft, omens, funeral rites, folklore and aesthetics (Bonnet and Watson, 1989: 2). African aesthetics surfaced throughout the Americas in ceramics, music and culinary traditions (Walvin, 2000: 81). The various Negro sub-cultures with African elements, developed in different parts of the black diaspora, included spontaneous syncretic religious practices such as the candomble cult in Brazil and the voodoo (vodun) cult in Haiti, Afro-Cuban music (the rhumba), the 'Nancy' Tales of the British West Indies, a vast repertoire of Jamaican sayings, humour in Caribbean culture, and the urban Negro (black) sub-culture in the north of the USA (Irele, 1989: 266). African in essence, these were means by which blacks have sought to reconnect with their African values and modes of thought, and to recover the pride and dignity of their heritage.

There was also the emergence of *Creole languages* everywhere which had its roots, inflexions, and vocabulary in African and native Indian languages and melded with English and other European languages to produce a hybrid language which was a medium of communication between the slaves. The web of Creole languages spanned the entire Atlantic world from Africa to the various slave colonies of the Americas enabling vastly different peoples to understand each other; a linguistic lubricant, according to Walvin, vital to the functioning of the vast Atlantic slave system (Walvin, 2000: 70, 71). In the Creole cultural complex, 'African' elements can be observed in language, diet, folklore, family and kinship, property, marketing, medicine, magic and religion, exchange-labour, economic organisation such as the susu (partners), as well as the African contributions in domestic life, dress, music and dancing (Watson, 1989: 295-7). African oral tradition, as a privileged method of preserving and transmitting knowledge, from history to medicine, among others, re-emerged in the Caribbean.

4.2.2: *Black musicality* in the diaspora obviously had its roots in Africa where it had great significance in African cultures. Black slaves manufactured their own musical instruments from local materials, and played and danced to their own music at various ceremonies and festivals in the slave societies that developed. Even when they were converted to Christianity, the black slaves invested Christian festivities with their music and drumming, in contrast to the more sedate style of the Europeans. Drumming in particular made whites uneasy, and was often restricted or banned as it was thought to be a means of communication between slaves in times of unrest or rebellion (Walvin, 2000: 73, 74)

There emerged a syncretic mix of different *faiths* in parts of the Americas. A religious characteristic which emerged in most slave societies was the relegation of benevolent spirits, common in African faiths, and the emergence of malevolent spirits given to causing harm, considered as a reflection of the harsh world in which slaves lived. Sorcery with African origins, particularly *obeah*, was said to be a potent force in the slave quarters. There were also soothsayers and forms of witchcraft, as well as herbal and natural medicines which seemed more effective than western medicine (Walvin, 2000: 75, 76).

4.2.3: *Christianity*, the religion of the white oppressor, was to play a significant part in the development of black culture and society. Slaves often adapted Christianity and infused it with a variety of cultural forms – African, European and American. Funerals, for instance were typically African in style with noisy, night-long, corpse-side vigils, and the placing of a range of artefacts alongside the deceased (Walvin, 2000: 76). In spite of various problems led by white slave-owners, the evangelicalism of the late eighteenth century swept large numbers of slaves into Christianity with the message of universal salvation through divine grace, intensity of feeling and expression, and an egalitarian church structure. In the islands, black congregations which emerged, notably Baptists and Methodists, were enthusiastic, musical, and noisy, with communal responses in ecstatic form, often with black preachers. Black Christianity became a form of slave community, of collective expression and improvement, as the Bible and its associated literacy provided a potent instrument for slave interpretation of the world and the hereafter. Powerful speakers and black leaders emerged through the church, some becoming associated with the great slave

upheavals of the West Indies in the early nineteenth century (Walvin, 2000: 77). This tradition would continue into later centuries and produce black leaders such as Martin Luther King in the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Besides, Christianity formed a bedrock for a much broader black culture and aesthetics in the English-speaking Americas. The Christian churches became the social and cultural points at the heart of the evolution of black culture (Walvin, 2000: 78). Many acclaimed black artistes and performers emerged from the tradition of the black churches as did musical forms such as *Gospel* and *Soul*.

Furthermore, in spite of the destructiveness of slavery on family life, slaves created family structures, as nuclear families emerged, though partners were often separated across properties. Family break-up and separation were common, especially in the nineteenth century, with transfers of slaves. But they created a network of self-help and sustenance, communities which also fostered ceremonies of birth, marriage, and death, of child-rearing and communal care, which were vital elements in the development of slave culture. The networks of family relations and friends became organic social institutions developed from the aggregations of labouring slaves (Walvin, 2000: 78-80). But the difficulties of rebuilding family cultures destroyed by slavery would have a lasting consequence among its victims.

4.3: Concepts of ‘Home’ (Homeland):

Concepts of ‘home’ and references made to it in the diasporas are complex and multiple, and transcend both place and time. For many blacks ‘home’ has become so transplanted and very diffused, and may refer to different places, both real and imagined. It is regarded with a sense of ambivalence in the case of the many that have lost any trace of the routes to their specific places of origin in Africa or any precise information about their genealogies, as such traces were obliterated through slavery and further migration. Thus ‘home’ is a variable concept in the black diaspora. It may refer to different places en-route to their present places of abode; it may be their country of birth or origin, an intermediate place of passage, the adopted country or nationality, or even a state of being to be constructed, or a place of destination offering the prospect of final settlement and prosperity (Bryce-Laporte 1989: xvii). In the midst of the complexity, however, for the black diaspora, Africa is generally regarded as the homeland, symbolically and/or literally.

Africa as the original homeland of the Negro was not merely a metaphorical expression. It offered an alternative to the humiliations and indignities of racism and disadvantage. **Garvey**'s 'Back to Africa' movement looked to Africa as offering the prospect of a life free from the oppression and domination by the white man, where black people can recover their lost dignity and fulfil their potential. However neither he nor his followers returned to Africa, a desire which was realised by others in the returnee colonisations of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Frustrated by the discrimination against them, many black Americans became Pan-Negro nationalists and advocates of emigration to Africa and elsewhere to build ideal democratic black societies such as was professed but not practiced in the United States (Johnson, 1998: 28-32, 129). Another Pan-African internationalist from a different generation of the twentieth century urged strong ties with Africa, rather than a physical return. **Malcolm X** urged that it is necessary to go back mentally, culturally, spiritually, philosophically and psychologically. The spiritual bond created would then unite them with Africa and promote a joint sharing of problems, and also help overcome white domination (Malcolm X, cited in Johnson, 1998: 148). More recently concepts of 'home' have been expressed in song lyrics by black artistes such as the reggae superstar Bob Marley:

Africa, Unite 'cause the children wanna come home
Africa, Unite 'cause we're moving right out of Babylon
And we're grooving to our father's land

Thus for some 'home' represented the realisation of dignity and liberation from oppression for black people. For others a return to Africa was an aspiration. Others also found solace in imagination and poetic expressions about 'home' either as place of origin or a desired condition. Alex Hailey's 1970's book '*Roots*' re-ignited the search for origins in Africa. Currently, DNA searches provide an opportunity for Black Atlantic diasporans keen to reconnect with an original place in Africa. At a political level the umbilical links with mother-Africa fostered Pan-Africanism and other forms of cooperation between Africans and their kindred blacks in the diaspora.

In the scattered diaspora of peoples of African origin, black culture was transformed. The presence in urban centres of significant numbers of a wide variety of blacks from different parts of the diaspora brought about new levels of consciousness of kind and communal cooperation among them, often to a degree not attainable in their

respective societies or regions of origin, according to Roy Bryce-Laporte, who points to cultural examples such as the 'Caribbeanisation' of the carnival and the Calypso, the internationalisation of Reggae, Rasta, Rap, Afro hair styles and Soul music, Santeria, Susu, Capoeira (Breakdance) and Salsa to suggest that they demonstrate how through cross-fertilisation resulting from migration and the mass media, black people from different parts of the diaspora have begun to share broader concepts or multiple references of 'home' which transcend place and time. They have brought Africa's substance and spirit in multiple forms and transcendental dimensions. 'Africa' is the source of cohesion, and their 'Africanity' a shared resource and a device for further liberation and linkage, development and empowerment as a diasporic people (Bryce-Laporte 1989: xvii-xviii)

4.4: Some consequences of racial subjugation:

Racism¹ and slavery had psychological, social, economic and political consequences for black people and for societies in the black diaspora. Aime Cesaire, commenting on the conditioning of subjugated people, refers to 'millions of men who have been skilfully injected with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement (cited in Fanon, 1986: 9). Fanon himself suggests that such an inferiority complex is the outcome of an economic process and subsequently the internalization or 'epidermalization' of this inferiority (1986: 13). He argues that 'the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and black races has created a massive psychoexistential complex' (Fanon, 1986: 14). Furthermore, that 'the negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority, alike, behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation' (Fanon, 1986: 60). Fanon suggests that the white man acts in obedience to an authority, a leadership complex, while the subjugated 'other' obeys a dependency complex. This, according to him, would explain why the European, the foreigner, was referred to as honourable stranger and welcomed with open arms and not thought of as an enemy. But instead of explaining these things in terms of humanity, of good will, of courtesy, basic characteristics of the "the old courtly civilizations", scholars tell us that it happened because, inscribed in the unconscious, there exists something that

¹ Racist ideology evolved in tandem with the practice of Trans Atlantic slavery and over epochs was modified and adapted to prevailing concepts of rational knowledge. It was deployed to rationalise colonialism. Crude theological arguments were even formulated to claim that the Negro was a descendant of Noah's son Ham, cursed by God, and doomed to be a servant forever as the price (See Bonnett and Watson, 1989: 5).

makes the white man the awaited master (Fanon, 1986: 99). Overcoming the psychological conditioning and constrictions imposed by subjugation was a challenge. This perceived conditioning was the focus of reggae superstar, Rastafarian Bob Marley and the Wailers (band), who lyrically enjoined black people: *'Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds'*¹.

The struggle against racial domination and discrimination also had a defining effect on the black diaspora. The common experience of racial subjugation became a unifier of the disparate black peoples. It mobilised popular black feeling in the struggle for emancipation and dignity.

4.5: Black Resistance and Cultural Movements:²

Resistance to domination of black people was expressed in various ways. These included art forms such as music and poetry as embodied in *Negro Spirituals* through which lyrical symbols were used as disguised instruments of resistance³ and a subtle mechanism of defence. The Negro Spirituals formed the basis of musical forms such as *blues* and *jazz* (Johnson, 1998: 5) and were an ancestor to poetry produced by the artistic and literary movement developed by French-speaking Negro intellectuals⁴ around the concept of *Negritude* which involved the awareness, defence and development of African cultural values, and epitomised counter-acculturation as it was a movement of reaction against western cultural and political domination (Irele, 1989: 263-4). Other resistance movements included *Pan-Africanism*, a movement of ethnic and cultural solidarity for people of African descent throughout the world, invoking an ethno-political consciousness with demands that included racial, political, and social equality (Johnson, 1998: 95, 102-106), and *Garveyism*, the 'Back to Africa'

¹ www.thirdfield.com/new/lyrics.

² For a fuller unabridged version see Appendix 'D'

³ Spirituals like '*Steal Away*' and '*Go Down Moses*' have been cited as expressions of resistance. In the case of the latter, they drew on the analogy of the deliverance of the Old Testament Israelites from slavery and expressed in the acceptable form of the Spirituals, their identification with the sentiment of exile and their aspirations to deliverance (Irele, 1989: 265). Negro spirituals formed the basis of musical forms such as blues and jazz (Johnson, 1998: 5).

⁴ Among them Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire, which critiqued Western society while it sought to cultivate awareness and appreciation of African values and modes of thought in reaction to racism and colonial domination. It has been described in terms of black cultural nationalism and closely related to African nationalism (Irele, 1989: 263-4).

movement (also known as the UNIA¹) which revaluated African cultural heritage and raised racial consciousness among blacks. Its themes of racial pride and solidarity were invoked in demands for civil and political rights (Johnson, 1998: 141, 123). The philosophy and strategy of *Garveyism* were later adopted by the *Nation of Islam* and the *Black Panther Party* and included the championing of Negro nationhood by the redemption of Africa, making the Negro-world race-conscious, instilling ideals of manhood and womanhood in Negroes, and promoting racial self-help, self determination, racial love and self-respect.

Similar sentiments inspired the development of the ideology of *Rastafarianism* which combined resistance to white racism and the culture of consumption, and expressed defiance through the medium of reggae music. Rasta challenged the colour-class gradations of the social hierarchy, and also rejected the link between Christianity and whiteness which cast God, Jesus, and the angels as white, and Lucifer, the embodiment of evil, as black (Campbell, 1989: 332, 339-340, 344). Reggae music continued to evolve in the spirit of resistance epitomised by Bob Marley and the Wailers, who extended the international reach and influence of reggae and Rastafarianism, and the message of social justice. Their song lyrics also addressed themes of liberation. These included songs such as:

‘Get up stand up for your rights, Get up stand up, don’t give up the fight’;
‘Blackman redemption, can you stop it? Oh No’; and
‘Buffalo soldier, taken from Africa brought to America, fighting on arrival, fighting for survival’² (www.thirdfield.com/new/lyrics (Accessed 26/10/2007))

Rastafarianism with its dreadlock hair culture spread throughout the Caribbean and also became fashionable in Africa and other parts of the world. The Rastafarian movement also aligned itself to liberation in Africa, lending its support to the Anti-Apartheid movement (Campbell, 1989: 347).

¹ UNIA: Universal Negro Improvement Association. Its programme was built around two linked grand objectives, racial pride and African nationalism, aimed to counter white prejudice against the black colour. Garvey exalted blackness, exhorting Negroes to be proud of their distinctive features; that African characteristics were not marks of shame to be camouflaged; that the redemption of Africa depended on rebuilding and restoring African culture.

In South Africa the doctrines of Garvey’s UNIA constituted a more radical challenge to white minority rule than they did to white supremacist and majority rule in the United States (Johnson, 1998: 141, 142)

² The liberation theme is also present in the lyrics of Osibisa’s *Woyaya* which refers to the African liberation struggle. (See Appendix ‘C’ pg 349)

The ferment that gave rise to the resistance movements also involved a cross-fertilisation of ideas and ideals of black emancipation and solidarity against subjugation and domination. The movements utilised a wish for independent expression, and combined a revaluation of black people and their sub-culture with social protest. Inherent in the movements was a cultivation of a cultural, social and political black identity, drawing on racial solidarity, common social experience, and spiritual feeling. The black cultural nationalism that emerged from political domination and racial oppression invigorated the sense of a pan-global black identity which white racism had awakened. The artistic forms they inspired developed into streams in popular culture which continue to have a global influence.

4.6: Antipodal racial identity construction: colour symbolisms and significations

‘Black’ and ‘White’ as racial descriptions have deeper connotations beyond their opposite positions on the colour spectrum. Their symbolism encapsulated cultural and racial perceptions and beliefs. Ironically, a broadly identical symbolism is attached to both colours in cultures around the world. As anthropologists found out, in various cultures, the colour white was consistently signified positively, red ambivalently, and black usually, but not always negatively¹. Black and white could therefore be arrayed in a series of antithetical pairs² (Turner, 1965: 69-71, 74, 77, 79, 81). It is difficult to assess if or how the antithetical signification of the colours ‘black’ and ‘white’ translated into a racial psychology among black people, and whether it predisposed them to an acceptance of the inferior status they were consigned to on contact with the ascendant Europeans with their advances in technology and socio-economic and political organisation. On the European side, modern European expansion involved power-laden constructions of ‘others’ and discourses on race which scientific racism failed to substantiate. The significations attached to black and white figured in racial constructions of the black ‘other’ where blackness was conceived as an antithesis of whiteness or binary opposites of virtue and vice: good/ bad, superior/ inferior etc. This typified the in-group tendency to exteriorise and negatively characterise out-groups in order to highlight their (in-group) positive attributes, and was by no means a

¹ See appendix ‘C’ for a fuller background discussion of colour symbolism among Blacks and Whites.

² Whiteness generally represented a host of positive things including: goodness, purity, health, life, fertility, cleanness, visibility or revelation, generosity, honour, authority and power. But in some instances it also stood for lack or misfortune.

Blackness stood for evil or bad things, misfortune, suffering, diseases, witchcraft, death, darkness.

monopoly of whites. In any case the antithetical representations shaped the antipodal power relations between white people and black people. As Laclau argues: 'the constitution of a social identity is an act of power' because 'if an objectivity manages to partially affirm itself it is only by repressing that which threatens it ... It is the same with black-white relationship' (1990: 33). Skin pigmentation as a product of environmental factors, as was the view in classical European times (Snowden, 1970: 172-3, 1983: 85-87), receded into the background and a colour hierarchy gained prominence, legitimising the subjugation of black and other non-white peoples.

From a psycho-analytical perspective Franz Fanon, the French-speaking negro intellectual, critically addresses the negative connotations attached to blackness in the white world which regarded virtue (good) as white and vice (evil) as black, and the derivative that the archetype of the lowest values is represented by the negro

In Europe, whether concretely or symbolically, the black man stands for the bad side of the character. As long as one cannot understand this fact, one is doomed to talk in circles about the "black problem" (Fanon, 1986: 189).

Fanon applies Jung's idea of the *collective unconscious* as a shared group mode of thought, to the antithetical notions held about colour:

In the collective unconscious of *homo occidentalis*, (the westerner) the Negro – or ... the color black – symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine ... the collective unconscious is not dependent on cerebral heredity; it is the result of ... unreflected imposition of culture (Fanon, 1986: 191).

Fanon argues that the *collective unconscious* is actually cultural - acquired. Hence even a Negro living in Europe could assimilate the *collective unconscious* of Europe, its myths and prejudices, and express a hatred of the Negro just like a European racist would.

4.7: Black identity:

The peoples of Africa did not originally see themselves as Africans. They belonged to specific ethnic groups and cultures with their particular kinship ties, languages, beliefs, and territories which gave them their identities and commanded their loyalties. The African identity was forged initially by European outsiders¹ and was later adopted by

¹ Similarly The term Negro (black) was also first used by Portuguese slavers (*negreros*) as a monochromatic colour term to refer to the diverse peoples of Africa (see Whitten and Corr, 1999: 214).

slaves in the Americas, with their specific origins lost and immersed in slave societies which demarcated black from white (Walvin, 2000: 66). From mixed backgrounds, they were united by their common experience and they brought a myriad of personal and social characteristics from their varied backgrounds in Africa which helped to shape slave culture in the Americas (Walvin, 2000: 68). Cultural change among Africans in the 'New World' derived from their new circumstances, forced work, relationships with other slaves, their relations with locals and whites as well as their own initiatives and aspirations. But the dispersal of peoples of African origin by choice and the dissemination of cultures of African origin predated the forced migrations of the Trans-Saharan and Trans-Atlantic Slavery periods (Bonnet and Watson, 1989: xxiii). Blackness is therefore not defined by victimhood alone. There is a long history of miscegenation and the diffusion of black people and their influences in European societies over centuries (See Appendix 'D').

European exteriorization of Africans on the basis of somatic features such as skin colour therefore helped to constitute blackness as a racial type unifying the discrete peoples of African descent, who despite their diversity, were represented in monolithic terms in discourses. Otherness and colour symbolism merged in an influential logic in the construction of blackness and the reproduction of discourses of power. Through the sharing in a common world of meaning the European discourse on 'race' was adopted by the black 'other' whom it was meant to exteriorise, as a legitimate discourse by which the black 'other' also identified itself (Miles, 1989: 75-76). 'Black' and 'White' therefore emerged as antipodal racial identities.

Gilroy locates 'blacks' in the West 'between two great cultural assemblages, both of which have mutated through the course of the modern world that formed them and assumed new configurations', and 'remain locked symbiotically in an antagonistic relationship marked out by the symbolism of colours' - black and white (Gilroy, 1993:1). Hall also argues that the term 'black' encompasses a sense of shared history and culture (rather than biological or racial essence) combined with a sense of deep divergences and differences (Hall, 1990: 223). It is thereby useful as an umbrella term for a heterogeneous group of non-white peoples.

In recognition of the power and implication of Eurocentric discourses and representations of otherness¹, Hazel Carby writes about battlegrounds that involve intense struggles to define ‘Americanness’ or ‘Britishness’, to distinguish a Euro-North American cultural and political heritage from its ‘Other’, whether that be Blackness or Orientalism. She observes that an Aryan, Graeco-Roman, European history, purged of Semitic and continental African influence, was created in conjunction with imperial ideologies of manifest destiny. Upon the tabula rasa of the New World a European future was to be imprinted from a purified European past. But whether the means be cultural and political erasure, or the contemporary institution of visible signs of minority status, the struggle of definition in relation to Euro-Americanness, shapes the past, present and futures of black people (Carby, 1999: 237). This recognises the consequences of power-laden discourses for black people. They impact the lives of black people directly and indirectly through the struggles they generate, struggles which have defined blackness. Subjugation of black people was premised on their presumed inferiority as was imperialism based on European superiority.²

The dominant construct of blackness that emanated from the US and Britain followed the tradition of the antithetical representations. It reflected a view of black people often based on myths as well as projections of black stereotypes drawn from deprived inner-city America and Britain, which did not take into account the historical traumas, scars, and alienation complexes caused by slavery and racism, reproduced across generations. The enduring characterisation of blacks was derived from pathological notions that mobilised a racist common sense which constructed blackness as deviance, where goodness in the black ‘other’ was an exception to the rule, or credited to ‘white’ intervention. The dominant discourses on blackness focused on delinquency and moral failure: irresponsible (absent) fathers, matrifocal families, criminality, feral youth etc. These were power-laden representations which have been

¹ In furtherance of this, contributions from African and Asian sources to the multicultural past of European society were ignored or erased from historical memory. It is such trends in the dominant forms of historiography that Martin Bernal’s *Black Athena* and similar revisionist work by other historians, challenge.

² Psychologically, there is the tendency for negative portrayals of a group to feed into the self perception of members of that group. This is the point Charles Taylor makes when he argues that identity is partly shaped by the recognition or misrecognition of others and that a confining, demeaning or contemptible image of a group mirrored back to that group can cause a distorted self-image (1994: 25).

reproduced in various forms, purveyed by the media, and embedded in the popular imagination. Their reification assumed ontological dimensions in racist discourses. But Edward Said observed that the crossing of boundaries brings about a sense of the permeability and contingency of cultures, enabling us 'to see others not as ontologically given, but as historically constituted' (Said, 1989: 225). Blackness was not ontological and 'black cultures', like all cultures, were not fixed and immutable, but diverse and dynamic.¹

There is also the wider impact of the discourses in society. It becomes evident in chapter five of this thesis which highlights the Ghanaian experience of blackness, that with the public imagination fed on the dominant discourses on race and ethnicity, notions translated into attitudes in situations of public interaction. As black people, they would encounter perceptions of blackness that were not always overt, due to political correctness, but were still obvious in people's attitudes, or so perceived.

4.8: Black Identity in Britain:

As already mentioned, the black presence in Britain dates back centuries, but the earliest communities in Europe were shaped through the development of maritime links between Europe and West Africa, and their numbers increased in the sixteenth century. Britain's black community developed from the mid-seventeenth century and was concentrated in London and the nation's major ports with the rapid growth of the Atlantic slave trade and the development of British slave colonies in the Caribbean and North America (Walvin, 2000:101). The dark skin in a white world was a source of curiosity. The colour contrasts also served as opposite points for concepts of difference between cultural values. Blackness invoked images of dirt, sin, evil and vice, whereas Whiteness conveyed opposing ideas of cleanliness and purity, virtue and goodness (Watson, 1989 Walvin, 2000: 104-105). The treatment of blacks in

¹ More recently, the appointments of General Colin Powell and his successor Dr. Condoleezza Rice as US Secretary of State by the Republican administration of George W. Bush, preceded by the appointment of Andrew Young as US ambassador to the UN during the Jimmy Carter administration of the late 1970s highlight the rise in prominence of African Americans in mainstream US politics. Access to the powerful instruments of the government of the United States, raises the black profile in America and on the international stage, and affords African-Americans a means of influencing US foreign policy towards black nations. By far the most significant position of any Black person in modern times was the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States of America, the most powerful political position in the world, superseding the previous appointment of Ghanaian Kofi Annan as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Britain was also defined by the Trans Atlantic slave trade, which conferred inferiority on blacks and increased their numbers in Britain until the black community became a problem in the eyes of white British society. Initially, their exotic presence in the homes of the wealthy as domestics, intended to impress, added a social cachet to their owners (Watson, 1989 Walvin, 2000: 105).

After emancipation, not only did the black population become a defining part of the Americas, it continued to migrate within and beyond the Americas in search of new economic and social opportunities. World War Two and the post-war labour demands of the British economy drew substantial numbers of blacks from the Caribbean to Britain to reinvigorate the old and well-established black presence in Britain. The migrations went back and forth across the Atlantic as some returned to re-locate in their island home from North America and Britain. The Caribbean presence was noticeable in major cities such as London, Manchester, Bristol and elsewhere, and further migrations from the West Indies to the United States and Canada (Walvin, 2000: 168). Besides, post-colonial migrations of former colonial subjects in Africa, Asia and elsewhere to the imperial centre further boosted the black presence.

Britain's black population is heterogeneous, with significant differences of language, religion, ethnicity and culture (Gilroy, 1993: 54). The unifying factor with Britain's black population is not the memory of slavery but the experience of migration and post-colonial position. British racism defined peoples of African, Caribbean, and Asian descent by the colour black as the mark of their common racial subordination which made a new politics of solidarity possible. An all inclusive notion of blackness was therefore configured in opposition to white racism in the 1970's and 1980's (Gilroy, 1993). Besides, 'black' as a concept had also been transformed from its pejorative connotations under the influence of the *Black Power* movement in the US, into a confident and assertive expression of black identity, and in the process 'chromatism'¹ was expunged. Afro-Caribbean and South Asian Britons appropriated the term 'black' with its new meanings (Brah, 1996: 96-97). In addition, according to Mercer (1994), the sign 'black' was also mobilized as a displacement for the categories of 'immigrant' and 'ethnic minority'. Black became a political colour of

¹ Used in terms of colour differentiation among blacks according to lighter or darker skin tone.

resistance and an alternative to the stigmatised racial definitions and identities. Hall sums it up when he suggests that in the context of the definitional politics that took place, a counter-position of positive black imagery was presented to unsettle the reified images of Black culture (Hall, cited in Back, 1996: 4). This counter movement tended to homogenise cultural, class and sexual difference within blackness. In the language of Hall & du Gay (1996: 59) commonality was negotiated through the contingency of social interests and political claims, and solidarity was situational and strategic. For the same reasons the hegemonic identity began to unravel in the changed political environment of the 1990s with the emergence of religious and communal movements (Back, 1996: 3), and a retreat into particularistic conceptions of cultural difference. Critics of the usage of 'black' as a broad political umbrella like Hazareesingh (1986) and Modood (1988) argue that the term has specific relevance to the historical experience of people of sub-Saharan descent with meanings that related to a positive political and cultural identity among African-Americans which did not apply to South Asians and so denies Asian identity. So as Asians and Muslims began to emphasise their separate identities, the term 'black' was used as a reference to people with African origins. However, the term 'black' continued to be used in the old sense in some instances. The Metropolitan Black Police Association, for instance, continued to cater for non-white minority groups from all backgrounds, (including Asians) within the London Police Force.

4.9: Black Culture: Gilroy, argues that the Black Atlantic Diaspora - a transnational formation linking Africa, America, the Caribbean and Europe – is the appropriate unit of analysis for the study of black culture(s). This Black Atlantic world was brought into being by transnational structures which now articulate its many forms into a system of global communications. According to him, the dislocation of black culture and its expression through black musics produced from the racial slavery which made a significant contribution to modern western civilization, now also dominates its popular cultures (Gilroy, 1993a: 80). Emphasizing black expressive culture of music and dance, he argues that such artistic forms have produced and sustained an interpretive community outside the orbit of formal politics in a long sequence of cultural and political struggles. Black expressive culture, according to him, has decisively shaped youth culture, pop culture, and the culture of city life in Britain's

metropolitan centres to the extent that it is impossible to speak of black culture in isolation from the culture of Britain as a whole (Gilroy, 1993: 34-35).

Furthermore, Gilroy argues that the disparate black populations in Britain adapted to their new circumstances by using the separate but converging musical traditions of the Black Atlantic world either to create a new conglomeration of black communities, or to gauge the social progress of spontaneous self creation, under the endless pressures of economic exploitation, political racism, displacement, and exile (Gilroy, 1993a: 82). In effect the musical heritage was an important facility in the transition of diverse settlers to a distinct expression of blackness, and also instrumental in producing 'a constellation of subject positions that owed its conditions of possibility to the Atlantic world', and also bore the indelible mark of the British conditions in which it developed. Gilroy also notes that some of Britain's Asian settlers borrowed the musical culture originating from Black America and the Caribbean in reinventing their own ethnicity. He highlights the significance of the fusion of Asian and black popular music, arguing that 'extraordinary new forms have been produced and much of their power resides in their capacity to circulate a new sense of what it means to be British', and that 'these latest hybrid forms will contribute to and take their place within a social movement of urban youth which already has a distinct political ideology' (Gilroy, 1993a: 61-2). These demonstrate how a synthetic culture can support some novel political identities. It also shows the wide appeal and transcendent impact of black cultures. Such independent cultural institutions, according to Gilroy, contribute directly to an alternative public sphere, a transfigured public realm to which multinational communicative networks contribute but which they have so far been unable to dominate. Besides, 'the emergent expressive cultures of blacks in Britain have acquired a global profile. The seemingly trivial forms of youth sub-culture point to the opening up of a self-consciously post-colonial space in which the affirmation of difference points forward to a more pluralistic conception of nationality and perhaps beyond that to its transcendence (Gilroy, 1993b:62)

Furthermore, he observes that the synthesis of various black communities from different national backgrounds in the Caribbean into a single connective black British culture, in effect, was achieved by meanings around blackness drawn from black America in particular, and the black Atlantic world in general and by the host British

conditions, particularly racism, in which it developed. Besides, the histories of struggle, the style, rhetoric, and moral authority of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements were also appropriated and rearticulated in distinctively European conditions. He states:

Dislocated from their original conditions of existence, the sound tracks of this African-American cultural broadcast fed a new metaphysics of blackness elaborated and enacted in Europe and elsewhere within the underground, alternative public spaces constituted around an expressive culture that was dominated by music (Gilroy, 1993: 83).¹

This was a transfer of cultural and political forms and structures of feeling marked by a discourse of racial emancipation. He therefore iterates that culture is not a fixed and impenetrable feature of social relations. Its forms change, develop, combine and are dispersed in historical processes. The syncretic cultures of Black Britain exemplify this. They have been able to detach cultural practices from their origins and use them to found and extend the new patterns of meta-communication which give their community substance and collective identity.

Overall, Gilroy's analysis is useful in demonstrating the dynamism and syncretism involved in contemporary black cultures and introduces intercultural and transnational perspectives on the study of black cultures and their continuing influences on youth and popular cultures.

4.9.1: Reconfiguring (redefining) 'Black Culture' in Britain

The affirmation of blackness in the Atlantic diasporas had a political resonance which distinguished it from black cultural expressions in Africa where most black people lived. Making the case for the 'Black Atlantic World' Paul Gilroy (1993) suggested that any analysis of black culture should be founded on the triangular Trans-Atlantic system. He also makes the assertion that the histories and cultural politics of the Caribbean and Black America form the raw materials for a creative process that defines what it means to be black within a distinctively British setting, resulting in a sequence of syncretic cultural processes in which black culture is actively made and re-made (Gilroy, 1987: 154). This assertion is however, open to challenge. The

¹ The Ghanaian/ Caribbean musical group 'Osibisa' epitomises this process, particularly the feature of the musical fusion that accompanies the reassembling of people of African origin in Europe

syncretic cultures developed among black people in the Atlantic Diaspora and their global influences demonstrate the resilience of black creativity, particularly against the traumatic historical backdrop of slavery, and serve as an addition to 'black' cultural heritage. But it begs the question of whether culture in its complexity should be defined mainly in terms of its musical expressions, or that 'Black-British' culture should be narrowly defined solely by the 'Black Atlantic' diasporic experience as an isolated historical episode without antecedents, significant though it was. At best this view of Black-British culture is anachronistic. It also suggests a quasi-canonical view of what constitutes 'black culture', with further questions about the criteria and parameters of what constitutes 'black culture' or more specifically blackness in Britain and why other forms of black expression should be discounted or excluded from the 'canon'. Gilroy glaringly fails to account for African¹ and Latin American expressions of blackness, as well as the African cultural heritage with its creative impulses and spontaneity which resourced the 'Black Atlantic'. The implied exclusivity also raises questions about who assumes the authority to pronounce on the configuration of blackness in Britain and in the process exercise the powers of inclusion and exclusion.

This thesis aims to, at least partly, redress this imbalance in representations by drawing attention to the infusion of a significant African element into the black cultural assembly in Britain. Demographically the modern African diasporic formations in London are as significant as the 'Black Atlantic' (mainly Afro-Caribbean) diasporic formations and gaining in visibility. According to the 2001 population census, the number of black Africans in London (378,933) has now surpassed black Caribbeans (343,567) and Ghanaian migrants are an important element of London's 'super diversity' (Mackintosh 2005). As cultures travel in tandem with their practitioners, the new wave of black diasporans from Africa come with their homeland cultures, resulting in intercultural syntheses and confluences.² The Ghanaian cultural presence in London highlighted in the next chapter makes the case for a more inclusive re-thinking of 'black culture' in Britain.

¹ Africa remained home to more than ninety-five percent (95%) of black people with cultural systems dating back to antiquity which continue to be significant to Black cultural expression as a whole.

² '*Osibisa*' epitomises this synthesis & blending and makes the case for a rethink of the narrow remit of Gilroy's assertions. See Appendix 'C' page 349 for the significance of *Osibisa*

4.10: Summary & Conclusion

Consciousness of the Black Diaspora: The development of the consciousness of blackness as an identity has historically involved European racial categorisations (external construction) and the self perception of peoples of African origins (internal construction/ self imagination). Politically the black diaspora emerged into prominence in the post Second World War period in the United States and the wider world¹. The black diaspora gained salience and focus through sporadic events and various resistance movements, black sporting achievements, black cultural expressions and race riots, among others.

Constructing Black Identity from without - antithetically: European racial characterisation and exteriorisation of Africans was on the basis of somatic differences of which skin colour became the primary distinguishing symbol. For both Europeans and Africans, 'black' and 'white' were broadly conceived in terms of antipodal, monolithic identities. The characterisation of black peoples from a white European perspective was set within a power-laden system of binary opposites: White/ Black, Good/ Bad, Superior/ Inferior. The intransigent racial dogma inherent in this antithetical perspective legitimated prejudice, racial oppression, and slavery. The consignment of 'black' humanity to the level of property and commodity further reinforced notions of racial inferiority of blacks and generated a complexity of social attitudes towards black people which had repercussions.

Forging Black Identity from within through solidarity and commonalities:

- The common experience of racial subjugation became a unifier of the disparate black peoples. Consequently, Black identity has been defined partly through the struggle for emancipation from racial domination and its psychological, social, and other effects. Resistance took intellectual, literary, musical and political forms. 'Black' as a concept was transformed from its pejorative connotations into a confident and assertive expression of black identity.
- The black cultural nationalism that emerged from political domination and racial discrimination fed into the cultivation of a cultural, social and political Black identity, drawing on racial solidarity, common social experience, and spiritual

¹ Martin Luther King's non-violent philosophy for peaceful change and racial integration, arguably raised moral consciousness in the United States and the wider world

feeling. The movements utilised a wish for independent expression, and combined a revaluation of black people and their sub-culture with social protest against domination and racial oppression.

- Black identity in Britain, however, embraced a broader spectrum of non-white peoples united by the experience of migration and post-colonial position rather than the memory of slavery. But this broad-based identity began to unravel as Asians de-coupled their identities from the black coalition.
- Black expressive cultures evolving from changes in black artistic expression and aesthetic codes of common origins through displacement, relocation, and transculturation, have acquired a global profile and have decisively shaped youth culture, pop culture, and the culture of city life in Britain's metropolitan centres, blending black culture with the culture of Britain as a whole.

Africa as homeland:

- Africa continued to play on the imagination of black people, some with ambivalence, as a homeland offering an alternative to the humiliations and indignities of racism and oppression. Its offspring in the diaspora could, and sometimes did, return mentally, culturally, spiritually, philosophically and psychologically, and in some cases, literally. In a hostile world their Africanity was a resource. Black resistance and cultural movements drew on African philosophical and cultural resources and aesthetics to develop their ideologies: Negritude involved the awareness, defence and development of African cultural values; Garveyism, revaluated African cultural heritage and raised racial consciousness among blacks; Rastafarianism drew inspiration from Ethiopia and Kwanzaa as a celebration in the US also drew inspiration from Tanzania; Pan-Africanism emerged as a movement of ethnic and cultural solidarity for people of African descent throughout the world to provide a united front for Africa and political activists in the diaspora in the common cause of black nationalism and emancipation.
- In reverse contribution, such movements re-inscribed African culture with their newness, focus and vitality, and invigorated liberation movements with their material support and inspiration. The relationships and flows consolidated and authenticated the diasporic credentials of the peoples and movements with links to Africa as the home continent.

CHAPTER 5
IDENTITY MATRIX
A complex of relational identities

The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line, - the relation of the
darker to the lighter races ... (W.E.B DuBois)

Outline:

1. Introduction
2. The concept of identity
3. Interwoven complex of Ghanaian Identity(ies)
4. Particularising Ghanaian Identity in London
5. Pan-Black Identity
 - Essentialising Blackness
 - Connecting through Reality TV
 - Discourse of Black is beautiful
6. Differentiating black & white through media stereotypes
7. Encountering racism and racial discourses
 - In the shadow of racism - Is it because I'm black?
8. Colour-coding of crime
9. Black-on-black crime
10. Perceived media portrayal of blacks
11. Articulating a positive Black Identity
 - Family Structures
 - Virtues of tradition
12. Summary & Conclusions

5.0: Introduction:

This chapter is an exploratory odyssey into the various interrelationships and dimensions of Ghanaian identity and how its facets were operationalised in encounters in London. It considers the dynamics between the intra-Ghanaian multiethnic identities that constitute ‘Ghanaian identity’ and how they were affected by relocation into a new environment. Besides, interactions and encounters with other identities within the black diaspora are examined. In addition, the different ways in which the subjects alternately essentialised their blackness as a strategy for empowerment, and switched to an emphasis on their Ghanaian identity to distinguish themselves, are also considered. For them relocation also meant swapping the homeland, where race was not an issue, for an environment where racial identity gained salience for historical and other reasons. The exploration therefore considers the impact of racial discourses and racism on their experiences as black people in a white world or as Africans in Europe. Typical of many of the respondents, Ghanaian, African, and Black were often used interchangeably in reference to their corporate identity to distinguish them from White, Western or European identity.¹

5.1: The concept of identity

The operating concepts around group identity include solidarity based on commonalities like origin, history, shared characteristics or ideals. It operates across difference, involves the marking of symbolic boundaries, and powers of inclusion and exclusion (Cohen 1985: 12; Friedman, 1994: 238; Hall, 1990: 222; Hall and du Gay, 1996: 2-4; Morley and Robins, 2000: 46). The significance of *difference* in identity construction is as much a recurrent theme as *commonalities*: ‘what you have in common with some and what differentiates you from others’ (Weeks, 1990: 88); ‘without outsiders, there are no insiders’ (Papastergiadis, 1998: 30); the positive ‘self’ is constructed against its negative ‘other’ (Derrida, 1981; Laclau, 1990; Butler, 1990). Hall describes identity as ‘a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself (Hall, 1991: 21). Edward Said (1978) points out how Europe as the dominant power defined itself by differentiation from its

¹ This was usually the case with references to their sense of group identity made in the Ghanaian dialects in which “us” referred to Ghanaian, African or Black, or a fusion of all. But sometimes the distinctions were made between these group identities.

constructed oriental 'other'. Identity and difference are therefore bound together; the self is defined by differentiation from the 'other'.

It is suggested that in late-modern times especially, identities are also *multiple* and never singular, fractured and fragmented, and constructed across different discourses, practices and positions, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (Hall and du Gay, 1996: 4). The internal homogeneity or 'unity' of identities, rather than being a natural or primordial totality, is a naturalized, over determined process of 'closure' (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1993). It is constructed through power play in processes of exclusion and inclusion, but it is also dynamic because such groups are continually redefining and recomposing their boundaries (Schlesinger cited in Morley and Robins, 2000: 46).

5.2: Interwoven complex of Ghanaian Identities:

The concepts cited above are useful in unpacking and exploring the relationships within the interwoven or overlapping identities of Ghanaian-Londoners. As modern subjects they have multiple identities which are called into being in different contexts of engagement. The concentric layer structure of an onion may be helpful in visualising the interrelated identities that constitute Ghanaian-Londoners. Apart from identities conferred by such designations as gender or occupation, they are defined by a range of group identities: **ethnic** (Ga-Dangbe, Akan, and Ewe, among others¹), **national** (Ghanaian / British), continental (African), and **racial** (Black). These identities are activated in the exigencies of social interaction. Intra-Ghanaian ethnic identities are activated by self-mobilisation and activities that define particular groups such as tribal festivals. A broad Twi-speaking ethnic group like the Akans, for instance, is constituted by sub groups of the same ethnicity that include Fantis, Ashantis, Kwawus, Akwapims, and Akyems. Similarly the Ga-Dangbes comprise various groups identifiable by variations of the common root language, a pattern which applies to the Ewes and other tribal groups. Subgroups of the same ethnic extraction from particular localities in Ghana usually organise themselves separately. Thus among the *Ga-Dangbes* for instance, the *Ga-Mashie* group and the *La* group each celebrates the same *Homowo* festival in London, but separately and on different

¹ Ghanaian nationality enclosed numerous ethnic groups. Reference is made in the chapter 6 (on the Ghanaian Diaspora) to the poly-ethnicity of Ghanaians.

dates, each scheduled to coincide with the parent subgroup celebration back in the homeland, even though they all belong to the same broader *Ga-Dangbe* ethnic group, speak the same language, and collaborate on certain occasions. This was a pattern within the multiplicity of ethnic identities, and it reflects the instances of internal diversity within the larger supposedly ‘homogeneous’ ethnic group.

Relationships between the different tribal groups are governed by classic in-group/out-group dynamics. While back in Ghana there was historical rivalry between the various groups, in London such rivalries lose their salience, or are naturally subsumed to the common broader umbrella Ghanaian identity, partly because there is no basis for competition over resources or for any form of power and advantage. They are all subject to territorial, political, economic and cultural hegemonies (English language, British sovereignty, etc), and as minorities and outsiders they face common socio-economic and other challenges which dictate a re-ordering of their priorities and cooperation with each other, as well as solidarity with other minority groups faced with similar concerns. Assuming bigger political identities such as Ghanaian or Black now gained importance over tribal identities and affiliations. But there were residual competitive feelings carried over from Ghana into the diaspora which were fed by phone-in radio programmes on niche Sky digital and other Ghanaian radio stations in London which discussed various issues in Ghana in Ghanaian languages. Respondents from the *Ga* ethnic group, for instance, had concerns about their tribal areas in Ghana being ‘swamped’ by the internal migration of Akans and other groups to the Greater-Accra region, attracted by the appeal of the capital, Accra. Consequently the accelerated sale of their stool-lands to meet the great demand for land, the dilution of their language and perceived erosion of their identity as a result of the influx, have become issues of concern which are carried over into the diaspora. These are sometimes discussed on the Ga-language radio channel which draws audiences from distant locations such as the U.S. Similarly, the Akans also have their radio discussions of pertinent issues. Besides, as Twi is the most widely spoken second language in Ghana, many Akans approach other Ghanaians in London with the presumption that they all speak or understand the Akan language and so address them in Twi. This was a source of irritation to many non-Akans. Interactive radio thus serves to connect the overseas community of Ghanaians to homeland issues and concerns, and helps keep alive the sense of their distinctive ethnic identities, and

sometimes their petty rivalries within the fold of the overarching Ghanaian identity. Among the younger generation of Ghanaians born in Britain, however, ethnic divisions and loyalties did not seem to register or have much importance and they seemed oblivious to any tribal rivalries which might exist amongst Ghanaians both in the homeland and abroad. They had a more romantic perception of being Ghanaian which could be attributed to being cocooned in the British environment and being British as well.

Discussions with the subjects¹ about their sense of belonging, and how they weighted their competing identities, brought up some interesting responses. None of the British-Ghanaians ever described themselves as European, nor did any of those born in England feel or describe themselves as English. The ambivalence was obvious:

About the British identity, it's a strange situation when it comes to that feeling of being British. I don't speak the Ghanaian language, I don't live there, but I feel more Ghanaian than I do British (Kwaaley, aged 38, female, Manager)²

In this family interview³ two sisters, who were born and raised in London, shared their thoughts on their sense of identity:

Ago, (aged 25, administrator):

I'm both Ghanaian and British. I wouldn't know what percentage to place on either. I've never thought about it.

Akweley, (aged 28, lawyer):

It depends where you are. If I'm on holidays in America and I'm asked where I was from, I say from England. If you fill out a form I say I'm Black-British rather than Black African. On a day-to-day basis, thinking about it, I'm very aware that I'm black and from Ghana. If Ghana played against England in sport I would support Ghana against England

Question: Why not support England since you were born in England?

Akweley:

Because I see myself as being Ghanaian first ... The thing is I was born here (England) and I have only ever known this life. But you are still aware of the fact that you are in a country where you are still in the minority group ... so you support the homeland first and then England.

Belonging to the minority group, it would seem, is significant in determining allegiance to the Ghanaian side of her dual national identity. In the case of Ago the

¹ For an overview of the study subjects see pgs 49-52, Chapter 6, & Appendix 'A'

² Date interviewed: 12-12-2006

³ Date of interview 18-1-2007 (Thornton Heath in South-West London)

fact that both national identities were seemingly merged and equal in her experience was similar to the experience of some other British-born Ghanaians. But even more intriguing is her sister Akweley's response which brought out the complexity involved in the multiple identity positions and the different contexts in which each was called into being. She could be Black, Black African, and Black British, but also Ghanaian and technically English as well. At home with her parents she was *Ga* and sometimes spoke with her parents in their native language. This illustrates the significance of context in bringing particular facets of identity to the fore.

It is also noteworthy that the awareness of a minority status in English or British society rather inclined her allegiance towards the black (Ghanaian) identity in the event of direct competition with her English side. This draws attention to the role of discourses that minoritise, or other factors that have a similar effect, in influencing allegiances to certain identities. Presumably, subtle reminders of their difference and their minority status, registered on the London-born subjects from time to time to undermine their claims or aspirations to full citizenship and this had the tendency of weighting their allegiance in favour of their parental origins.

For some subjects therefore, there was the dichotomy of being simultaneously inside and outside the British/ English national community, and trying to feel a part of a culture that once and still regarded them as the 'other'. The tension within the experience of citizenship that was not all-inclusive transmitted a sense of a disputed or partial citizenship. This feeling was more acute in adults born in Ghana who had now acquired British status, as these comments from various respondents recorded at different times indicated:

Mrs Opoku aged 43:

I don't boast of being British because whites don't recognise you the black person as British. Nobody here recognises your Britishness. You are only a refugee here. The British passport makes little difference in that respect (Mrs Opoku, aged 43, mother of three, *Old Kent Road Family*)¹

Alice aged 42:

I have never identified myself as British anywhere except when I'm travelling and I use my British passport and the convenience it provides. I don't really feel British, maybe I do just a little, especially when it comes to things that being British allows you to do. I support Britain in sports against all others

¹ Interview conducted at the family home Old Kent Road, South East London. Date: 26-1-2007

except Ghana. As for our Britishness - we came here to adopt it. But we were born and grew up in Ghana (Alice, mother of four, *Olive Grove Family*)¹

Kweku Nti aged 59:

I am first of all a black person, and then a Ghanaian. As for being British it's just in name, you can't become it. You're just having a laugh thinking of yourself as British. If a white person arrives from another country even as an old person, they'll look more British than you even though you've lived here for much of your life. There's not much difference between the white newcomer and the white British and s/he is more likely to be regarded as British (Kweku Nti, aged 59).²

Here the perception is that 'race' is a significant part of Britishness.

Husband and wife of the *Walworth Family*³ also echoed similar sentiments:

Mr. Ankrah aged 46 (husband):

I don't think this country accepts you. You don't feel you belong. Every now and again they remind you that this is their country and you don't belong here. When you are out on the road (police stops), at work or in other public places, you are reminded by certain attitudes.

Mrs Ankrah aged 43 (wife):

Like in Ghana you go to work and everyone talks to you

Husband:

Here you can go to work and greet people and they may choose not to respond.

Wife:

Or they may talk to you today and ignore you the next day

Husband:

You may interact with them but still sense an artificial barrier between you. You are not fully accepted.

The predominant view therefore was that, despite being technically and legally British, their Britishness was not recognised in everyday life, because in most people's minds and attitudes, Britishness was still strongly associated with whiteness, and blackness was a barrier to full acceptance, or so they felt. The unconditional acceptance, social norms and fraternity they were accustomed to back in their homeland contrasted with the inconsistent reception they encountered in London. The experiences at work may be explained in terms of cultural differences rather than rejection, although in some instances the latter could not be ruled out. But cultural difference seemed to entrench the feeling of not belonging.

¹ Mother of four, *Olive Grove Family (Woodgreen)*, North London

² Kweku Nti, (aged 59) Administrator (ex-teacher), Denmark Hill, South London. Date Interviewed: 28-1-2007

³ Date interviewed: 9-12-2006

Another reminder of the tenuous condition of their citizenship was encountered at the points of re-entry into the UK, especially Heathrow and Gatwick airports. Restrictions on food imports affected many of the Ghanaian food items that they wished to bring back on their return from Ghana. At the point of re-entry Ghanaians, even with British passports, like other ethnic or national groups with a background elsewhere, remained outsiders coming in, as they were pared of aspects of their identity - their native foods, particularly where the items involved did not pose any risks and were prohibited for European market protection reasons. Stories about successful smuggling of prohibited food items through customs were small but symbolic victories for people who collectively, did not have much of a voice and so did not have much influence on state legislation in matters that directly affected them. Such issues flagged up their alterity vis-à-vis the British nation they were seeking to become a part of, and was a reminder of the contested nature of their citizenship.

Young people showed more ambivalence in their sense of identity and this came across in various interviews. In one group of teenagers in North London¹, when asked about their sense of belonging, a curt reply by Adoma, a 17 year old girl summed it up for all the others: '*British by paper, Ghanaian by nature*'. The rhyming phrase suggested it was probably a rehearsed response to questions of this nature, and a reflection of how they all understood their hyphenated identity, as no one disagreed with her statement. But among a group of boys in Tottenham Green² in North London the response was more elaborate:

Socially I feel more Ghanaian, but when it comes to legal matters I'm a British citizen. Socially I wouldn't like to lose my Ghanaian identity. In society or say in court, you can be treated differently if you're from abroad, if you are not a citizen of the country that you're in. So if it comes to more governmental things then I'd be more British, but if it comes to social things, I would be more Ghanaian (Musa, aged 19)

The applause he received from the whole group for his statement suggested that they were impressed with the way he expressed everyone's sentiments on the issue. Again context was significant to the different ways in which their identity was operationalised.

¹ Interview with teenage friends gathered in the Pallet Grove home. Date: 10-12-2006

² Group interview of boys conducted at the Tottenham Green family residence. Date: 30-09-2006

Nicola, aged 14 from the *White Hart Lane Family*¹ split her dual nationality in percentages:

When people ask where I'm from I tell them I'm from Ghana. I don't usually say that I'm British. I feel like 70% Ghanaian and 30% British because my family comes from Ghana

In the *Walworth Family*², all the children were born in London, as was their mother who was also Ghanaian. Their father was the only one born in Ghana. But each put a different weighting on their sense of dual British-Ghanaian identity:

- Anita, 10 year old called it 50% British and 50% Ghanaian.
- Fred, 15 year old felt 60% British and 40% Ghanaian,
- Mark, 18, considered himself 90% Ghanaian and 10% British.

This lack of uniformity was typical of the younger generation in general. It also reflected the tendency for young people to appear to lean more towards their Ghanaian identity as they grew older and hence their sense of British identity varied. But there was no such ambivalence about being black. It was a more straightforward issue.

In the *Woodgreen Family* Paul, aged 18 and his sister Abena aged 17 both London-born and bred, claimed 100 per cent Ghanaian nationality. This prompted a question about the British aspect of their identity:

Abena:

No one in my family is English so I don't consider myself as a British person. I was just born here but my family and my background is from Ghana

Paul: British people are white and I am black

This was a rather simplistic but straightforward approach to the issue of British identity. In this sense race is again considered a determining factor. Incidentally both siblings preferred to live in London and admitted that they would not like to live in Ghana for any length of time even though they visited Ghana regularly for holidays. Even if this was because their lives and relationships were in London, there was still the hint that the 100% claim regarding their Ghanaian nationality was an exaggeration. But it still reflected a preference for identification with their parents' origins. In a chat with their mother it emerged that Abena, her daughter, had once said

¹ Date: 7-10-2006

² Date of visit 8-10-2006

that if she was sent to live in Ghana against her wishes she would go to the British High Commission in Ghana and tell them that she is British and wanted to be returned to Britain. Thus contrary to their pronouncements, they recognised and accepted their Britishness. They also conflated Englishness with Britishness both of which they associated with whiteness. Having been born in London their Englishness could be taken for granted. But they abandoned their English identity, considering it incompatible with being black. This seemed to be at variance with Les Back's view that 'the aesthetic of Englishness shifts from the English, white, racist triangle to a multiracial notion of Englishness in which a Black English aesthetic can legitimately exist' (Back, 1999: 150). Technically, a Black-English identity exists on paper, and allowances could be made for exceptions to the rule. Experientially, however, racism rendered the two identities mutually exclusive. Paul Gilroy (1987) pointed to the foisted mutual exclusivity between blackness and Englishness, capitalising on a racist slogan of the 1970's: '*There ain't no black in the Union Jack*'. Quintessential notions of Englishness may conjure thoughts of tea, the local pub or Sunday roast, and sentiments about the white cliffs of Dover, among other things. But these did not quite resonate with this new generation of English subjects as much as did *Fish and Chips*, and annual events such as *Guy Fawkes' Night* celebrations with its fireworks displays which young people in particular were fond of.

Being British was not without its contradictions. It meant being grafted into a British heritage with its chequered history which included conquest, subjugation, colonisation, and enslavement of black people; induction into British traditions, institutions and system of governance, and 'British culture' in general. Such notions were of more theoretical than practical significance. The subjects did not consider themselves as erstwhile imperialists and many did not feel any allegiance to the British monarchy either, a condition that presumably is shared by many white British people, especially those of a republican persuasion, or those who viewed the monarchy as anachronistic. Besides, the subjects also felt distant from political figures, both British and Ghanaian.

However, compared with Englishness, the notion of Britishness felt more inclusive having acquired a more plural meaning embracing the 'Home Nations' and other nationalities. Yet the older generation of Ghanaians, born outside Britain, found it difficult to feel British. For many subjects therefore, notions of Britishness were

embroiled in various issues, notably of race, which undermined their sense of citizenship. From such a perspective Black and British did not blend properly. But this was not the only perspective. What emerges is the subjects' variable interpretation of their sense of Britishness. Discourses around 'Black-British' in the wider society also gave a similar impression; that Black-British was separate from pure British, otherwise they would just be British without the prefix 'black'. The hyphenated Black-British identity alluded to two identity categories that were conjoined, but unblended. Blackness was indissoluble in the presumed colour of Britishness. Even within the intimate proximity and communion of shared nationality, the racial 'other' was separately categorised and so blackness was a separate category within the nation. From another perspective this may be considered transitory as Britishness transitions from its previous whiteness to a mongrel multiracial identity.

5.3: Particularising Ghanaian Identity in London:

The multi-ethnic composition of London brought Ghanaians into close proximity with different groups. From 'backstage' ingroup conversation among the subjects, distinctions were often made between various black identities and in a sense that rejected the homogeneous perception of blackness by outsiders. Ironically, although they disliked stereotypes generally applied to them, they attributed deviance to certain blacks and virtue to themselves in typical ingroup style. They had opinions about fellow Africans such as Somalis and Nigerians, and about Afro-Caribbeans and other groups, each of which evaluated fellow blacks from 'othering' perspectives. Usually, it was the younger generation who, from a closer interaction with blacks of other backgrounds, picked up on others' impressions of them.

Rivalry between Ghanaians and their West African neighbours, Nigerians, had a long history which often reached a flashpoint in football matches between the two nations where Ghana, the smaller country in terms of size and population¹ had a good record against Nigeria, the bigger, wealthier neighbour. A dilute form of the rivalry was carried over to the UK and this filtered down to the younger generation as they interacted with Nigerians at events such as independence anniversaries in London. They sometimes heard slogans such as '*Ghana must go*' (which emerged in a group

¹ Ghana's population currently estimated at 24 million compared to about 120 million Nigerians

interview of young people), a reference to the expulsion of Ghanaian migrants from Nigeria in the early 1980's which mirrored the expulsion of Nigerians from Ghana over a decade earlier. The usage of the slogan '*Ghana must go*' in London was an interesting one. It was an attempt to evoke an event from the past when Nigeria was at the height of its oil wealth and power, and was an attractive destination for Ghanaian migrant workers, and exercised that power in the expulsion of the Ghanaian migrants from Nigeria, as difficulties were beginning to set in, even though they recognised the remarkable contribution of Ghanaian teachers to the Nigerian education system. The usage of the slogan '*Ghana must go*' in London about a quarter of a century (25 years) after the event was an attempt to recall the sense of superiority that the power to expel Ghanaians from Nigeria produced and to reassert that assumed status over their Ghanaian counterparts in the neutral context of London where neither of them was really on top; where they, like other minority groups, were embroiled in citizenship struggles, and where the power of exclusion was wielded by someone else – the British. But the futile psychological games over superiority were common to all the national groups in the black diaspora and the Ghanaians were no exception as 'backstage talk' often revealed. They felt superior to Nigerians but were discreet about it. Talk about Nigerian notoriety for scams and corruption was common, and it was suggested that Nigerian crooks had resorted to using fake Ghanaian passports to do their scams since Nigerian passports were so tarnished by the notoriety gained abroad over scams.

Similar dynamics characterised Ghanaian relations with their Afro-Caribbean counterparts. Ghanaians generally referred to Afro-Caribbeans by a term which translates into 'sugarcane people', a reference to sugarcane plantations in the West Indies that they had heard or read about. They were seen as having a threatening poise. They were also thought to resent Africans for selling their forebears into slavery. Kwaaley who was born and raised in London, like others in her category, had a first hand knowledge of her Afro-Caribbean peers and understood the similarities and differences:

Growing up I was very aware that I was African and they were West Indian. And sometimes I used to get teased for that fact of being an African. I got on with them in plays and everything but there was always a sense that you had the West Indians and the Africans. It wasn't like a turf thing, just an awareness of difference. We all had the same accents and everything. It's just that we all

knew about each other and who comes from where and in those days there was almost like a stigma attached to being African. On the other side the African parents would be really wary of the West Indians.
(Kwaale, aged 37, Manager)¹

This wariness referred to the general impression among older Ghanaians gathered from local folklore and criminalised impressions of black youth in the media which Ghanaians associated with Afro-Caribbean youth. Media references to Jamaican² ‘Yardie’ gangs, guns and crime provided the stereotypes of West-Indian youth as dangerous types who carried knives, and this circulated among Ghanaians. Outside of the black community, however, this stereotype was extended to all black youth without distinction. A group interview³ with young people brought up similar experiences of difference:

Ms. Yaaley, college student, aged 17:

Sometimes Afro-Caribbeans don’t like us because they have been told that we Africans sold them into slavery.

Ms. Ama, university student, aged 19:

Sometimes they call us ‘African bubu’ and they make fun of our accents and stuff ... And Jamaicans, they use images of Africans on TV against us and say stuff like ‘look you were on TV. Look at your dry legs’

The reference to accents was also significant. In this interview all the participants spoke with London accents, but were aware of instances where African accents were mimicked and ridiculed by Afro-Caribbeans. Accents⁴ were in some contexts a marker of difference or fed into insider/ outsider differentiations. They often served as a quick index of cultural or geographical origins and attachments, and were linked to prejudices associated with different peoples and places usually gathered from media representations or commonsense observation.

Black-on-black intra-racial slurs such as cited above were not uncommon, as media reports indicated⁵. It showed how some blacks, notably Afro-Caribbeans, developed

¹ Date Interviewed: 12-12-2006 (first of two interviews)

² ‘Jamaicans’ was sometimes used to refer to Afro-Caribbeans in general. But those who got to know the differences between various Afro-Caribbeans groups suggested that people from the smaller West-Indian islands such as Barbados, St Kitts and others were of a calmer disposition than the Jamaicans.

³ Group interview conducted at Woodgreen, North London.

Date Interviewed: 7-1-2007

⁴ Its wider significance is discussed later in this chapter under Signifying Practices

⁵ The ex-Arsenal and England black footballer and TV personality, Ian Wright, of Afro-Caribbean background, was once reported in the newspapers, accused of racially abusing a Nigerian traffic warden in an altercation over a parking ticket.

an ‘insider’ mentality, having established communities in Britain before the influx of Africans, and perhaps felt that they had greater claims to citizenship and recognition over the Africans. As such they regarded Africans from the perspective of white insiders. This was comparable to what was described previously as imbibing the *collective unconscious* (page 72). Africans picked up on such sentiments in their encounters with Afro-Caribbeans. Desmond, a West Indian acquaintance of the researcher made the assertion that Afro-Caribbeans made it possible for other blacks and Asians to settle in Britain by bearing the brunt of the struggles against white racism. Such claims and the ‘we-were-here-first’ attitudes, arguably, were linked to the development of an ‘insider’ mentality. Besides, Afro-Caribbeans seemed to have an ambivalent relationship with Africa. While some appeared to harbour some resentment towards Africans for their involvement in the slave trade which victimised their forebears, others were caught up in ‘roots’ sentiments, discourses, and ideology¹ and made fond references to their African origins.²

The reference in the interviews to TV images and how they fed into others’ perceptions (in this case Jamaicans’ perception of Africans), is an example of how media representations and stereotypes informed people’s opinions about other people and places which they had no first-hand knowledge of. This confirmed Van-Dijk’s assertion about people in multiracial contexts learning about ‘others’ through mediating texts and stereotypes (1987: 383). Les Back appeared to challenge this view by suggesting that even though stereotypes were available to the young people he studied, they were not used in any crude sense (Back, 1999: 123). Ordinarily, there would be little to choose between Afro-Caribbeans and their African cousins, and yet judgements were made on the basis of TV images and such representations informed the opinions and prejudices of others, and in this case Afro-Caribbeans looked down on Africans on the basis of TV images of deprivation in Africa, which were not too different from images of deprivation in the Caribbean or Asia. This worked both ways as some Africans blamed West Indian youth for providing the stereotypes of black youth criminality in the media.

¹ ‘Root’ ideology developed in the Black Diaspora on the basis of common African origins as an identity reference point. It is prominent in Rastafarianism (see Appendix D)

² *Desmond’s*, a sit-com on British TV which ran on Channel 4 in the early 1990’s, with a predominantly Afro-Caribbean cast, attempted a portrayal of African/ Afro-Caribbean identities.

Notwithstanding the intra-black teasing, banter, and the jostling around notions of superiority, the subjects interacted with Afro-Caribbeans at school and elsewhere and made friends among them, as did some of the older generation. Some adult female subjects described friendships developed with their Afro-Caribbeans counterparts with whom they exchanged ideas on culinary practices. They developed a taste for some West-Indian dishes such as ‘*dumplings*’ and ‘*Jamaican Pattie*’ among others, as did their West-Indian friends for certain Ghanaian dishes. Afro-Caribbeans who attended Ghanaian parties also enjoyed the variety of Ghanaian dishes available. A respondent described one such friendship:

One of my best friends is a West Indian from Guyana. I have been there (to Guyana) a couple of times and she’s been to Ghana with me. We mix foods when we organise parties. I cook Ghanaian food and she prepares Guyanese food (Ardee, aged 51, nurse & mother) ¹.

West Indians who visited Ghana with their Ghanaian friends returned with a changed outlook on that part of Africa from what they had believed previously and a desire to visit again². Needless to say that Ghanaians and Afro-Caribbeans shared similar physical attributes and on occasion attention was drawn to the point that the Jamaicans were their cousins. This was backed up by historical and other evidence that most Jamaicans had Ghanaian ancestry and even shared the same folk hero in their folktales in *Ananse the clever spider*³. Before TV became common in Ghana, evening story-telling was dominated by stories involving the mischief or heroics of Ananse the spider. Apparently Ananse tales survived the transatlantic migrations and assumed indigenous status in the West Indies. Some Jamaican acquaintances of the researcher in conversations even insisted that Ananse the spider was an indigenous Jamaican folk-hero and so belonged to them, implying that the Ghanaians may have borrowed their folk-hero Ananse. But this was a good example of continuities of African culture in the wider black diaspora and how cultural icons originating elsewhere can become indigenised.

¹ Ardee, Interviewed 16-12-06

² An instance from personal knowledge involved an Afro-Caribbean who ignored warnings from his Afro-Caribbean friends that he would be risking his life, and accompanied his Ghanaian friend on a visit to Ghana. The experience was a pleasure and subsequently, he went back to Ghana a few more times. For some ‘Black Atlantic’ diasporans visits to Africa had great ‘roots’ significance. Famous Jamaican reggae superstar, **Jimmy Cliff** has a home in Ghana and is said to live there for periods of time, as is former world heavyweight boxing champion **Lennox Lewis**. **Bob Marley’s** widow **Rita Marley** is also said to have a home in Ghana as well as a high profile role with the chieftaincy of a Ghanaian tribe.

³ See Continuities and Survivals of African culture in the Diaspora in Black Diaspora chapter 4

In terms of demeanour it was thought that Jamaicans were more like Nigerians in temperament, and were aggressively poised, unlike the much calmer Ghanaians¹. Similarities were also noticed in the loud manners of Afro-Caribbeans at card and table games in general. Like Ghanaians they played such games with bursts of loudness and exuberance and would often smack the table-top hard with the playing cards or dominoes, as part of the style of play, in contrast to white players who placed their cards down softly and quietly when they played. Their love of music and consumption of tropical foods, were also pointed out as marks of similarity, among other things. In other ways their different diasporic experiences had produced differences between them. But as they now shared the same living space in London other dynamics were at work. Les Back affirms an old assertion that ‘shared locality offers an alternative identity option to divisive and exclusive notions of ethnicity or “race”’ and showed how identities were being forged between black and white at youth level (Back, 1999: 71). Similar processes are occurring among black peoples from the Caribbean and Africa in the urban spaces of Britain. Relationships are developing at various levels, from friendships to intermarriages between Ghanaians and their Afro-Caribbean and other African counterparts in the UK, as well as with whites. These are usually noticeable at Ghanaian social events where Ghanaians can be observed in the company of their Afro-Caribbean, African, and white partners and friends. This could be seen as part of what Gilroy is said to have described as ‘kaleidoscopic formations of “trans-racial” cultural syncretism ... growing daily more detailed and more beautiful’ (Gilroy, quoted in Back, 1999: 245). In such a space the possibilities exist for identities to be re-made.

London therefore provided a setting where Ghanaians encountered other identities at close quarters and had first-hand knowledge of other black people from the Caribbean and Africa through interaction. This provides an interesting view of how people from the same region in West Africa diverged along different historical and cultural trajectories, only to re-converge at the centre of the imperial metropolis and forge new identities. Some similarities endured in the historical experiences, but differences

¹ After the Broadwater Farm Estate riots of the 1980’s in which PC Blaiklock was killed by a predominantly, though not exclusively, Afro-Caribbean mob in retaliation for the killing of a black woman by police officers, changes occurred in the composition of blacks on the Estate. The housing of many Ghanaian families on the estate afterwards was credited with the calming influence that descended on the Estate.

inevitably also emerged in the uneasy reunion of cousins in the family of black identities in a white environment.¹

In the corporate imagining of blackness, therefore, despite the diversity, there was recognition of commonalities and national and international connections with black people elsewhere with whom they shared common origins and aspects of their histories. But despite their invocation of historical origins, identities are said to be about the use of such resources as history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being; not a return to 'roots' but about 'routes' (Hall, 1990: 222; Hall and du Gay, 1996: 4). It is about constructing an on-going reality rather than dwelling on the past. The internal differences within the black community were often subsumed to the advantages and interests of black solidarity. In different contexts Ghanaians emphasised their ethnic or national identities and their in-group virtues, and dissociated from any negative baggage that a broader, more heterogeneous group identity might entail, in typical in-group fashion. With blackness this meant repudiating negative stereotypes extended or projected to them and imputing negativity to others instead. But in other contexts, in a case of strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1988), they embraced the overarching black identity more fully for a sense of empowerment, relegating their particularisms into the background. The ways in which this outward essentialisation was expressed will now be considered.

5.4: Pan-Black Identity - essentialising blackness

In essentialist terms, cultural identity is described as the 'collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves" which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common' (Hall, 1990). This is said to provide stability and to guarantee an unchanging unity or cultural belongingness underlying all the other superficial differences. It is considered as a bond; as the affinity that associates those identified, that extends to them a common sense or space of unified sameness. It is a tie that holds members of the collective together (Goldberg,

¹ But the relationship with East Africans like the Ethiopians and particularly the Somalis was different. The Somalis, though dark skinned, were generally taller with softer curly hair compared to the kinky hair of the West Africans. They did not quite blend into the existing black community, and seemed to identify themselves separately, arguably because of their comparatively more recent influx and the emphasis on their general Islamic identity. North Africans, who were generally lighter-skinned than their Sub-Saharan counterparts, were thought to regard themselves less as Africans or Blacks, as they leaned more towards their Arabic and Islamic identity.

1994: 12; West, 1993: 163-168). Groups may inflate their identity to broadly include others they share certain characteristics with as a strategy for confronting the lack of representation & disenfranchisement. Critical mass then becomes a basis for claims to cultural citizenship.

In the case of Ghanaians, assumption of their black identity was less strategic in terms of mobilisation for direct political action but derived from an awareness of a global entity of black people with whom they shared commonalities such as racial phenotype and links to Africa as well as common struggles against racism and domination. It was solidarity with like, in a racially demarcated world. Black successes elsewhere, in sports or politics, cast a positive reflection on black people in general. Such instances could be considered as representation by proxy where the black candidate or contestant carried the aspirations and hopes of other black people. Events involving black people elsewhere carried resonances for them from such places as Southern Africa to places like the US. When, for instance, hurricane Katrina struck in 2006 and caused widespread devastation in New Orleans, which was predominantly populated by blacks, not only did it gain the attention and sympathy of viewers, as was usually the case with news of natural disasters, the response of the US administration to the victims came under scrutiny, with suspicions of racism-induced lack of urgency in the slow and inadequate government response. In a typical group conversation that took place at a Christmas gathering¹, this cropped up among other issues:

Bennie (female, aged 53)

It took 5 days for the US administration to respond to their own citizens in New Orleans when previously they had responded quicker to the Asian Tsunami disaster because the victims in New Orleans were mostly black

Awuah, male, (aged 46):

Racism clearly played a part even in the rescue effort. I saw on the news, a white British couple on holiday who were caught up in the floods in New Orleans, but were rescued. They spoke of their experience in an interview and said that they were selectively picked up by the rescue team from the water while many blacks waving for help were by-passed, and they attributed it to their colour. Racism always plays a part in America

Tawiah male (aged 60):

In the US they are always trying to bring down successful black people. They will find something to discredit and defame you and damage your reputation.

¹ Extracts of conversation at Christmas gathering of families at Tooting in South West London. Conversation was endless as was the variety of issues discussed, and the brief extracts here are reproduced because of their relevance. Date: 25-12-06.

It was seen as no coincidence that black people who rose to prominence in white society usually tended to fall from grace either through accusations of tax evasion or due to some other strings being pulled to bring them down. Examples ranged from world boxing champions such as Jack Johnson¹, Joe Louis, and Muhammed Ali to entertainers like James Brown, among others. The perception of racist victimisation of black people elsewhere fed into the collective imagination of identity. They had something in common, a racial identity, with people in different parts of the world whom they may never meet, but were aware of through the media. This identification-with-like may be understood in terms of Anderson's idea of the imagined community (1983) transposed into a transnational context. In this case a collective sense of belonging is defined by issues of 'race' and nourished by the global media.

Moreover, Ghanaians vicariously shared in black achievements in the world. They derived inspiration from black luminaries, including black figures in American politics (past and present). The US Secretary of State in the George W. Bush administration, Condoleezza Rice, former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan (a Ghanaian) and the late Civil Rights leader, Martin Luther King, were named by young interviewees as sources of inspiration. More recently the political campaign of Senator Barack Obama, an aspirant for the Democratic presidential nomination², captured their imagination. Ghanaian-Londoner, Peprah³ who had always followed US politics with interest and had consistently supported the Republicans from a distance, switched allegiance to the Democrats for the first time because of Obama. When the subjects were asked what would be the significance of a black person like Senator Obama becoming US president, the response was usually positive and enthusiastic. A black US president would enhance their collective image and self esteem. Hopes for his success were sometimes tinged with some ambivalence and even fears for his safety.

Kwaale (On Obama)

¹ Jack Johnson was the first black world heavyweight champion, a title he won in 1908. He served nearly a year in prison for what is now seen as a racially motivated conviction for transporting white women across state lines for immoral purposes. The US Congress has now recommended that a presidential pardon be granted to Johnson. Source: BBC Teletext. Date: 27-9-2008

² These interviews were conducted before Obama won the Democratic Party nomination, and went on to win the race to become the first Black president of the United States of America

³ Barrister aged 51 also featured in interviews and conversations quoted elsewhere in this work

I suppose on the one hand it would show that it is possible for a black person to reach the top. I think it's a symbol of change I suppose. But I think the time is not right not because the people are not ready for it but because there are too many world problems at the moment. I'm worried for him because I know what white people are like. He's got nothing to do with the world situation now and the problems that have been created. He's got a real big thing to tackle. And I know that if he doesn't manage to turn it around, which would be more than understandable, they would still blame it on the one black president that was there, and hold it against any other (black) person that would come in power (in the future). It's a difficult thing to say but part of me would rather he didn't win. I want him to win, but I don't. I can't even say that I want him to lose. I'd be disappointed if he lost, but I would also be relieved at the same time (Ms. Kwaaley, aged 37, manager)¹

Similar sentiments were echoed by another subject on Obama running for president:

If he is elected it would be nice to see and would show the whole world that the black person also has a right to be in a position of power because we are also human. We have brains just like white people, although we do things differently. I am not absolutely sure that America is ready for a black president. I just wish him luck because I fear what they might do to him if he wins. Besides the problems that have been created are too big for him to come and resolve; things that would take a lifetime. It would be in trying to resolve those problems that he would become unpopular with certain groups or factions. That would be his problem. He is not going to have a field day if he wins. There are big issues to deal with and they are too big for him or anyone else to solve. And a lot would be expected from him being a black person. If you are black what would take half a second to give to the white man would take half a century before it is given to you. The same goes for women presidents (Auntie Dei, Civil servant, aged 59)²

Such ambivalence rather than suggest a lack of solidarity or lack of black ambition, reveal strong patriotic feelings around their black identity. This would be the big stage in modern times for black ability and worth to be expressed at the highest level and only success would suffice. A black person at the helm in the US, with its superpower status would have great symbolic significance. A more optimistic note was struck by 18 year old Danny of the *White Hart Lane*³ family in response to the Obama issue:

Yeah if he's elected I think it would be a good idea because he's a good person. Before, I wasn't interested in politics things, but now I have been drawn towards it. If he becomes president it would be good and just show that black people have the power but before then it was just like black people go out to do bad things, but if a Black person becomes president it would show that black people are actually good. I have read his biography. I have read the

¹ Interviewed 29-12-2007 as a follow-up to conversations and previous interviews

² Second interview recorded on: 31-12-2007

³ Follow-up conversation on 11-12-2007

book and I think he will be like a father figure and do well for America and change a lot of things.

Again an emerging successful individual is seen as a representative of black people. Links are also made to issues relating to black virtue as a counter to the portrayal of blackness as deviance. Ironically, the US was the country in which some of the most appalling episodes of racial discrimination and oppression, including enslavement of black people, occurred. It would, in a sense, be the culmination of the long struggle of black people for emancipation from subjugation and for racial equality. It would be a riposte to racist dogma on black inferiority, a challenge to notions of a colour hierarchy, and enhance black people's collective sense of worth. Obama therefore represented more than just a presidential candidate in a US election. He was a symbolic representation of the hopes and aspirations of black peoples the world over and an embodiment of their struggle for due recognition of their worth. But this enterprise would have to contend with unrealistic popular expectations about change, which, considering prevailing global realities (economic and other problems) and the interests of powerful groups, would be a tall order to deal with for any leader, black or white. Such considerations were at the heart of the feelings of ambivalence expressed by some of the subjects. But most people did not care about such considerations as long as the black person got his chance at the helm of power. The vicarious or symbolic 'participation' in the distant political events across the Atlantic was therefore an expression of their identity as black people constructed around common origins, shared concerns, hopes and aspirations.

5.4.1: *Connecting through Reality TV:*

When asked whether they felt represented by black contestants on TV programmes, the responses indicated that they did not. However, outstanding or successful black contestants made them proud and got their support. The appeal of the contestant came first before his/ her identity.

Politically conscious, London-born Kwaaley explains:

In situations where a (good) black contestant appeared on a reality show, I would empathise with them and would feel that they are *one of us* and I would be supporting them. For example when Lemarr was on *Fame Academy*, I remember texting all my friends and saying 'vote for Lemarr', because I just recognised that black people don't necessarily participate in those things so the black competitors would lose out. Because I think black people watch

programmes like that and say ‘yeah, he’s good, he’s good’, but won’t actually interact in the process and then someone like Lemarr¹ would lose as a consequence because people have a tendency to get behind their region or their person. I am generalising, but I don’t get the impression that we (black people) really necessarily participate in those things. We may watch it, but as far as to pick up the phone and do something, doesn’t necessarily interest us (Kwaale, aged 37, manager²).

The phrase ‘*one of us*’ suggests a taken-for-granted unity of black people. This sense of a corporate black identity tinged with patriotic sentiments was often seemingly stronger in the British-born subjects than in their parents’ generation, though both generations had a shared sense of blackness. Besides, she expresses a commonsense observation of black attitudes such as a lack of interactive engagement with reality programmes as they apparently failed to participate in phone-voting. This was a common perception among the subjects, and as it was based on anecdotal evidence it showed one of the ways in which group perceptions developed, and the role played by the media in such perceptions. It also showed how identities can be mobilised or activated around *Reality TV*³. The Scots, Irish, Welsh and other regions, tended to vote in favour of any outstanding contestant who hailed from their region or shared their identity, and so did many black people, as alluded to by the respondent. However, this was not always the case since the appeal of a contestant could cut across different groups and transcend group loyalty. The cases cited in the footnotes are among the rare instances where such group loyalties could be said to have been

¹ *Fame Academy* was a reality-TV talent-hunt music competition on BBC TV in 2003. Lemarr, the black contestant on the show, came third behind the eventual winner, Scottish David Sneddon, who was not heard of afterwards. But even though Lemarr did not win the competition he went on to produce chart-topping hits and was the only one to emerge from *Fame Academy* with an enduring music career, winning awards, becoming a household name and acquiring celebrity status.

² Interviewed 12-12-2006

³ The equivalent of BBC’s *Fame Academy* was the more successful *X-Factor* singing competition on ITV where the winner won a lucrative recording contract. In the 2005 series a comparable incident occurred in which a very good female black singer called Mariah was eliminated in controversial circumstances, having failed to secure sufficient public vote to progress and was then subject to the judges’ discretion in a straightforward choice between her and an Irish all-girl group called the Conway Sisters. The deciding vote was cast by the Irish judge on the panel, Louis Walsh, in favour of the Irish girl group, the Conway Sisters, causing controversy, even though his decision may have been in good faith. Among subjects who watched the series, the issue was cited as an example of the failure of black people to vote for their candidate in contrast to the apparent solidarity allegedly shown by the Irish judge to the Irish group on the show. Such incidents demonstrate that one of the ways by which the consciousness of black identity is raised is through common viewing of TV programmes, particularly reality TV competitions such as *Fame Academy* and *X-Factor*. This is not to suggest that ethnicity, race, or group loyalty always determined outcomes of such shows.

In a twist of irony, the feeling of injustice helped make this a tabloid story, and was said to have boosted Mariah’s singing career instead. This also showed that it was perhaps not about racism. It was a complex play of loyalties and fandom in which the racial component may have been incidental.

activated because of the talent or appeal of particular contestants or the excitement or controversy they generated. The overwhelming majority of participants failed to engage group loyalties in this way and were eliminated. But reality TV winners like Timothy Campbell a black 27 year old London Transport manager who won the first episode of the BBC's *Apprentice*¹ in 2005, or pop singer Leona Lewis², who won the *X-Factor* competition on ITV in 2006, became celebrities, and were informally 'inducted' into an imagined black 'Hall of Fame'³.

The apparent apathy of black people to interactive voting was not the only reason perceived to affect black performance in TV competitions by those who wished black people to do well:

Auntie Dei

Most of the time the programmes have a white orientation and so when it gets to questions about white issues or typical white things, it can be difficult for black people in like quiz shows and they are not gonna do well.
(Auntie Dei, aged 59, civil servant)⁴.

Question:

What if your support for a black contestant is considered to be racism?

Auntie Dei:

Well everyone tends to support their own. That is not racism. Racism is where your actions cause problems for someone else. Everyone has a favourite in any competition. It's like football everyone supports the team of their choice. I call it preference. Where you deprive someone because of their colour or creed, then that is racism. But supporting someone in a competition does not deprive or affect anybody. The person may win or lose.

Inherent in such definitions is the understanding of racial identity in terms of positive group solidarity rather than in negative conflictual terms. Here a commonsense distinction is made between group identification around the racial divide (for empowerment) and racism as a power-laden practice operated through discriminatory practices that disadvantaged its victims, usually exercised by those in a position of power and privilege. Moreover, the fact that the dominant culture was the prevailing context for many things was alluded to in the reference to quiz shows where success was dependent on one's knowledge of 'white things'.

¹ Reality TV series in which business hopefuls are taken through several weeks of tasks and eliminations and the eventual winner is hired by Sir Alan Sugar on a six-figure salary

² Ms Leona Lewis had number one hits in America, Britain, and elsewhere with her song entitled '*Bleeding Love*' and also performed at the Closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in China in September 2008. Her popularity and appeal transcended blackness.

³ Featured in Black publications such as the *New Nation*.

⁴ Auntie Dei, married with grandchildren.

The same could be said of international beauty pageants where white aesthetic standards served as the criteria for judging beauty. But criteria for beauty varied in different societies. Traditional less-westernised Ghanaians, for instance, evaluated female beauty differently¹. But the adoption of western style beauty pageants and their formats represents an implantation of a model that sets in motion a drift towards the white ideal which black contestants needed to be closer to if they were to stand any chance at such competitions. The issue of differing standards of beauty came up in a discussion among a group of female teenagers:²

Ohenewa, aged 17:

At beauty contests like Miss World competitions, black people are at a disadvantage. My mum used to say that the judges are mostly white and they have their own idea of beauty. White people's idea of beauty is like Audrey Hepburn's head shape, blue eyes, little lips, pointy nose etc. But we black people have different features – wider nose, fuller lips, kinky hair, dark skin...

Dela, aged 14:

Black people have (big) hips, and bums and everything. But they want all models to be skinny, like size zero.

Such observations recognised the dominance of western culture and the pressures to conform to the white ideal. Girls reflected on how music videos usually featured light-skinned girls which together with the promotion of slim models sometimes made them feel insecure. Another aspect of this issue was hinted at on a visit to the *Walworth Family*³ where an African beauty pageant on TV⁴ modelled on western style beauty contests, drew attention to the difference between the plump black African contestants on the show and the usually thinner Western types, and drew critical remarks about western beauty standards that encouraged thinness. But this was a reflection of the selective attitude to cultural appropriation – in this case adopting the western concept of beauty pageants but preferring the models to reflect African aesthetics, at least in part, which may be considered as an example of cultural syncretism.

¹ For them a beautiful woman would have features such as a full curvy plump figure with rounded features, neck lines (produced by the plumpness), full hips, slightly bow-legged, slightly gapped front teeth, among other features. Flat bums, bandy legs and skinny, slim features were not considered attractive.

² Group interview in Notting Hill Gate, West London. Date: 8-1-2007

³ Date of visit 4-10-2005.

⁴ Original Black Entertainment (OBE) channel on Sky TV

Issues around phenotypical features were therefore significant in racial discourses, especially as markers of identity and difference, and were intertwined with perspectives on culture. Black and White were fundamentally, distinctions based on phenotypical differences with political and cultural dimensions and power connotations. Evaluations based on such representations as well as appropriations across the racial divide were part of the experience of diasporans living in a western environment.

5.4.2: 'Black is Beautiful' discourse:

The designation 'black' encompassed various shades of dark skin ranging from very dark to light skin complexions. It would seem that a lighter skin complexion was preferred in instances where some blacks tried to lighten their skin complexion. None of the subjects who participated in this study had done this but the issue emerged in discussions. Young teenage subjects were particularly scathing about people who bleached their skin, but others compared them to whites who were equally keen to tan their skin. Both extremes, it would appear, were not considered attractive, as human nature tended to avoid extremes (of black or white, tall or short etc). In the case of blacks however skin lightening was interpreted differently by some because of the notion of a colour hierarchy with whiteness on top, paralleled by the dominance of white people in more recent historical epochs. The young subjects noted that the models of beauty purveyed in the media promoted thinness and light skin types, but were adamant that they were proud to be black. In one instance in the *Olive Grove Family*¹ home, the two teenage siblings discussed the singer, Michael Jackson's skin colour change from dark to a lighter complexion. While 17-year old Paul called him a disgrace for wanting to be white, his sister sympathetically argued that Jackson's skin change was due to a disease, based on the singer's own explanation in a TV interview. But this reflected the strength of feeling against black 'sell-outs' who were thought to betray blackness by wanting to be white.

In this group interview², young girls were forthright in their views on the colour issue:

Abena (aged 16):

People starving themselves to be thin, they don't wanna be themselves; they wanna be like someone else. Like those who bleach their skin. If you wanna be lighter there's something wrong with you because there's nothing wrong

¹ Date visited: 28-7-2006

² Recorded on 7-1-2007

with dark skin. If you want to bleach your skin and make it look lighter you must have some psychological ... (problems)

Ama (aged 19):

There's even a nick-name for dark-skinned people at my university called shade a-hundred. They're like 'smile so I can see you', comments like that. I don't find that offensive because I'm proud of my colour. Black is beautiful, you know. Back in the days if you were in school and you were dark skinned, you got insulting comments like 'black bag', or 'your hair is the same as your colour, the same colour as your shoe' etc. This was also because the media glamorised only the light-skinned girls and not mixing everyone in.

Discussions elsewhere produced similar sentiments:

We have Afro-kinky hair and all that. They don't know that black is beautiful, but not too black (laughter from other participants). Too black is not attractive. When people are too black, in the dark all you can see is their eyes blinking (Dela, aged 15).¹

There was therefore a confident affirmation of blackness among the young people, who were generally comfortable enough with their colour to talk about it with a sense of humour, despite media glamorisation of light skin. Compared to their parents, the young people seemed more politically conscious and assertive about black identity. Their sometimes strident affirmation of blackness could be understood as a reaction to the notion that light skin complexion was preferable and a rejection of the colour hierarchy. The **older generation** showed more conservative, sometimes ambiguous, attitudes to colour issues. Some found light skin attractive while very dark skinned 'black beauty' types were also considered beautiful. There were also myths about skin complexion as an index of physical durability among some in the older generation. Darker-skinned blacks were supposed to be physically tougher and more robust in health than lighter-skinned blacks. As in the next interview, pride in being black expunged notions of inferiority, though some preferred to emphasise common humanity rather than racial distinctions:

I believe that I belong to the human race. The colour of my skin has nothing to do with what I can or cannot do... I've always been proud that I am black. Even within my own family, there are lots of fair-skinned people, but I have always been very dark, so even back home I was constantly reminded of my blackness although at home it didn't mean anything. It wasn't demeaning or derogatory. They'll always tell me 'you are too black', because my father and sisters have a lighter skin complexion. I'm so dark and even my gums are dark, so I've always been conscious of being black. What is important to me is that I

¹ Group interview in Notting Hill Gate, West London on 8-1-2007

should study hard to be able to stand up to anybody of any race. I don't want to be white or any other colour. That's why I pity black people who act white. They don't even know what they have. They are looking for an identity. They don't feel valued in themselves. It is because over a long period we've been brainwashed to think that to be good is to be like the white man. That no longer applies. To be good is to be yourself; is to be useful to yourself, your family and the community at large. (Rev. Agyemang, clergyman, aged 47)¹.

His recognition of the psychological impact of racism on black people is an issue addressed at length in Franz Fanon's writings². The affirmation of the aesthetic quality of blackness has historical and philosophical resonances. 'Black is beautiful' was not just a riposte to racist discourse that denigrated blackness. 'Black is beautiful' as a discourse is a legacy of the political activism of Garveyism³ and also connects with the philosophy of Rastafarianism⁴ and even with the message of pop artistes like James Brown – '*Say it loud, I'm black and proud*'. All of which speak of a political and philosophical affirmation of blackness in response to racism. Even though no direct reference was made to its historical roots in black emancipatory movements of previous centuries, Ghanaian-Londoners' affirmation of their blackness, particularly by young people, acquired a deeper meaning as it bought into a discourse that embodied the connectedness of black people; one that provided a conceptual rallying theme that bound black people together and instilled pride in their common black identity.

5.5: Differentiating black & white through media stereotypes

Stereotyping is often criticised, but generally remains a shorthand method of identifying and distinguishing between groups. Van-Dijk argues, and data from this study supports his assertion, that people in multiracial contexts learn about others through mediating texts and stereotypes (1987: 383). Elsewhere in this chapter, the way West Indians and Africans mutually formed opinions about each other's group through media representations and stereotypes, was cited. In similar fashion stereotypes were sometimes used in the attempt to understand or establish differences between white people and black people.

¹ Date of Interview 26-4-07 Putney, South-West London

² Cited in chapter 4 on the Black Diaspora

³ See Black Diaspora Chapter

⁴ Discussed in Black Diaspora Chapter

Television served as a medium by which the subjects could observe other cultures. It afforded a close-up view of 'white' culture in various settings, domestic and public. These offered opportunities for cultural comparisons, evaluation, critique, validation or appropriation to be made. Noticeable differences observed via screen ranged from culinary practices to outdoor lifestyles across a number of programmes. Among attributes that the subjects appreciated about white people were such things as attention to detail, planning, time-discipline and dedication to chosen causes. But news of endurance adventures such as mountaineering, or instances of someone trekking through snow to the South Pole, and other risky feats which sometimes cost lives, were difficult to justify and contrasted with black people's perceived cautious attitudes. References to such news items were made occasionally in conversation or in interviews. Retired grandfather Akwei who had lived in England since the 1970's observed:

They (white people) are more daring than us (black people) and maybe it helps them to make discoveries. Look at the news of the 14 year old boy sailing solo for 3,000 miles for instance. I can't imagine a black man or a Ghanaian telling his family he is going to be the first person to climb to the top of a certain mountain. His family would ask whether he is trying to kill himself. What is the use of such an adventure when you have a wife and children to take care of? They would think you are insane for wanting to do such a thing or attempting to sail solo for 3,000 miles. But the white people do it as a matter of self-sacrifice for fame and glory, which may not be all that important, but makes a name for him or his family. We (Africans) lack that sense of self-sacrifice and it retards us (Mr. Akwei, aged 73, retired)¹

This was not an isolated observation as similar views were expressed in conversation, as was the case in this example:

Did you hear the news story about the experienced girl climber who fell to her death? I read it in the Metro newspaper. There was also the case of a stuntman in America who vowed to continue with his dangerous stunts because that was a source of thrill and excitement even though he admitted that it might kill him, and it did. He died recently. A black person wouldn't do that. Look at the crocodile hunter, (the Australian Steve Irwin), how he handled wild snakes and crocodiles fearlessly. In the end he was also killed by a sea creature. The black person wouldn't take such risks. (Peprah, Barrister, aged 51)²

In these instances perceptions of difference between whites and blacks were derived from comparisons made on the back of news events or some other mediated text. The

¹ Date: 3-1-2007

² Date: 11-11-2006

general assumption was that white people were bold risk-takers and black people were not. Obviously not all white people had a risk-taking disposition, nor were all black people averse to adrenalin-fuelled behaviour. Snake-handling or snake-charming, for instance, had its practitioners in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world. Yet the risks taken with wild creatures by Steve Urwin, the Australian naturalist, for instance, becomes a source of inferences of differentiation. The scope of white cultural pursuits viewed from the perspective of difference, serve as a basis for such conclusions. The preponderance of representations of white culture on screen across a gamut of domestic and public activities - from family life to outdoor pursuits, and across various genres - could foster a distortion in the way the world is viewed or understood, and cultural attributes assigned by viewers. Mediation then emerges as a significant factor in the development of views and stereotypes, and without it knowledge of others would be limited to folklore and the narrow remits of personal experience. And the proliferation of media technologies creates opportunities for greater mediation of knowledge of other cultures than ever before.

In other instances the stereotyping revolved around culinary practices. In discussions around fears raised by news reports about food-related diseases such as Salmonella in eggs, Foot and Mouth disease or CJD in livestock, the interviewees often referred to the differences in the cooking practices between black people and white people as observed on screen and in real life, and suggested that black people's cooking habits reduced the risk of contracting diseases contained in foods:

I believe that with most things the media exaggerate things, but I also believe that the danger is there. But one thing with us Africans or black people, I wouldn't even say that it is due to natural resistance, but the black person would boil an egg properly. At least it reduces the risk. When I'm cooking light soup I make sure that it is properly cooked so that any microbes are destroyed. Last time we had lunch at work and people were eating undercooked meat with blood in it. They eat things like sushi which is raw fish. But the black person would fry the fish properly before consuming it. It is about the way we cook our food. The risks are there but you try to minimise them. (Peprah, Barrister, aged 51) ¹

This was a popular perception reiterated by others:

They (white people) don't cook their food like we do. When you have the blood still running in the meat, all the diseases remain in it. On TV cookery programmes meat

¹ Conversation recorded on 11-11-2006 (One of a series)

dishes are prepared within 10 minutes and eaten. But we (black people) cook our food properly, or shall we say we overcook our food. In fact we cook it to destruction. But white people don't cook like that. They say that cooking destroys all the nutrients in the food. So be it. I'd rather be sure that there is no blood in the meat when I'm eating it ... See how they dunk fried potato chips in the liquid egg yolk. I can't imagine eating it like that, I just can't. Just seeing it eaten like that makes me literally sick. I can never get used to it. But that's the way they prefer it and it is in those things that disease lurks. But if you hard-boil the egg or if you fry it properly, how can you catch a disease from it? (Mrs. Quaye, aged 69)¹

In these instances they positively evaluated 'black' cooking habits as a means of reducing the risk of contracting food-borne diseases - an affirmation of their cultural practices. The benefits claimed for African style cooking by the respondents amounted to the formulation of a psychology of security against some of the numerous threats that get mentioned periodically in the media which tend to induce feelings of helplessness. But when confronted with risks and threats beyond their control, the Ghanaian subjects sought psychological sanctuary in the efficacy of certain practices, beliefs, myths and ontological assumptions linked to their biological and cultural identity.

On the whole these were attempts to understand the differences between whites and blacks from various perspectives and practices. Much of this functional working knowledge of the white 'other' was based on stereotyping as were the presumptions of overcooking made to include all black people, and the role of the media in this process was significant.

5.6: Encountering racism and racial discourses:

Discourses around blackness reflect the racial structuring of society. The prefix 'black' acts as a distinguishing label for coloured people, particularly of African descent. Terms such as 'Black-British', black youth, black-on-black, and black culture, are all part of the linguistic currency of contemporary society and a means of expressing the transition from a relatively homogeneous white society to a more multiracial, plural British society, as discussed previously. Some of the experiences of the subjects regarding this overarching homogenised black identity and the discourses around it, are subsequently explored.

¹ Date interviewed: 15-12-2006 (First of two interviews)

5.6.1: In the shadow of racism - Is it because I'm black?

Back in Ghana their main group identities were tribal rather than racial since, with the exception of a few, everyone was black. But in Britain, racial identity had historical and cultural significance and racial issues were an unavoidable aspect of their experience. Even mundane administrative procedures like filling in a form involved colour categories such as Black British, Black African, Black Caribbean, and Black Other. Stereotypical perceptions of blackness were encountered in various contexts of social interaction. It was therefore not uncommon for people to interpret certain experiences in terms of racism. Most respondents had some kind of personal experience which they attributed to racism. This family interview¹ provided a couple of examples:

Mrs Opoku, aged 43:

I remember how when whites came over to our country people were nice and kind to them and showed them typical Ghanaian hospitality. We come over here and we are not as welcome. You see a different side to them, fake smiles ... Barely a couple of weeks into my new job I got into difficulties with my checkout cash till. A huge issue was made out of nothing. My boss had me searched. I felt humiliated and suspected that it was because of my colour and maybe that the boss did not like black people like me.

Mr Opoku, aged 51:

I was the only black man at my work place and was the butt of various racist jokes. Usually I would find that someone had drawn a racist cartoon of some sort on my locker. Sometimes it was a caricature of a well endowed black male in the nude.

Experiences of this nature were linked to myths and fascination with black sexuality still held in white society. Some subjects felt criminalised by other people's attitudes of suspicion or when people felt threatened by their presence. Such public attitudes reflected perceptions about black people in circulation usually reinforced by media or racial discourses. But this was not simply a whites' attitude to black people. Ironically, black people, having fed-off the discourses in circulation (the imbibed *collective unconscious* of the society they lived in), were themselves wary of other blacks, which was not the case back in their all-black homeland where they were at ease and tended to trust each other more². This illustrated the far-reaching impact of media representations and prevailing discourses. They provided the lenses by which groups were perceived, or the material with which groups were stereotyped. Mediation

¹ Date of Interview: 26-1-2007 Old Kent Road in South-East London.

² Gathered from observation and conversation

therefore often superseded the limitations of personal experience in the knowing of other groups, but was also fraught with potential distortion.

Similar experiences of perceptions of blackness were recounted by teenagers in a group interview.¹ Young Ghanaian-Londoners, like other young blacks, were generally categorised as 'black youth', a term that had connotations of trouble-making.

Yaaley (female, aged 16):

I accidentally bumped into a Chinese woman and she screamed. She thought I was gonna do something to her. But I was just walking and she got in my way and we bumped into each other accidentally. And she held on to her purse so hard I just laughed.

Mary-Ann, aged 17, student:

They make us out as if we are bad people. Like any black person is a bad person that's gonna do something bad to them. Like I was on a bus and the driver asked for my Oyster card. I went into my pocket and someone started shouting 'she's got a knife, she's got a knife'. And I was thinking 'what? What are you talking about'? And I just got my oyster card and I touched it on the machine and went to sit down. Because I was down in my pocket the bus driver was scared as well cos he thought I was gonna start an argument the way lots of people start arguments with bus drivers if they don't have their oyster cards. Just because I'm black does not mean I'm gonna start an argument with him.

In these incidents myths and notions held about black people were played out rather than verbalised. Notions of criminality, violent conduct, a threatening persona, myths about black sexuality, linked to the monolithic constructs of blackness in circulation, could all be discerned in these encounters.

Racism had become an unpopular word. With overt and flagrant racist attitudes retreating in the face of political correctness, racism adopted less obvious 'closet' forms. For the subjects, awareness of covert racism sometimes bred uncertainty about how to interpret certain attitudes that they encountered, and suspicions of racism could not always be substantiated, as is confirmed in this extract:

Sometimes I think maybe I have a chip on my shoulder because when white people do something to me or when they behave in a certain way, it could be something small and I'll always think 'are they doing that because I'm black'? And I don't want to be like one of these black people who've got a chip on their shoulder (Kwaaley, aged 38 Manager)².

¹ Date of Group Interview of teenagers: 7-1-2007. Woodgreen, North London

² Date of interview: 12-12-2006

She suggests that racism had produced ‘chip-on-the-shoulder’ attitudes in some black people who interpreted white people’s actions mostly in terms of presumed antipathy to blacks. She did not consider her blackness to be that sort, which was an example of how individually, people expressed their own sense of what it meant to be black and dissociated from other peoples’ ‘black’ attitudes. But her commonsense observation of other blacks’ attitudes suggests that reaction to racism left its marks on some blacks, just as bearing the brunt of racism may have toughened blacks from the Caribbean and produced what others see as a threatening persona in some, which they did not associate with Asians and Africans in the UK. But even for subjects like the next respondent without any ‘chip-on-the-shoulder’ attitude, racism always cast a shadow and sometimes it was the only explanation for certain occurrences:

Some things happen and you ask yourself “is it because I’m black”. For example I have a niece at university doing a masters degree in Industrial Chemistry. She was the only black in a class of 15 and was the only one who could not get a placement. She spoke with a Yorkshire accent and so there is no hint of her being an African when she speaks on the phone. So they invite her for interviews and as soon as they see her, “oh we are sorry we can’t take you” even though she was a brilliant student. Things like that frustrate young people (Mr Boateng, aged 53, *Enfield Family*)¹

And there were others who felt the same way too as the next example from the *Tottenham Hale Family*² indicated. The children in this family had access to good education, and confidence in their teachers was never an issue. Nevertheless, stories in the media and hearsay kept suspicions about racism lingering in parents’ minds:

Sometimes at school some teachers have preconceived views about black pupils, and tend to guide them into certain subject areas they consider to be what our children are best at. My friend’s daughter wanted to become a pharmacist but her teacher thought that she was only good enough to be a lab technician. But she went on to qualify as a pharmacist. They shouldn’t assume that all young blacks are into singing, hip-hop or reggae. Such stereotyping leads to frustration (Mrs Odom, 43)³.

In this case the school teacher’s advice to the aspiring black pharmacist may have been delivered in good faith but could not be trusted as an objective assessment of the pupil’s ability and was construed as advice based on preconceived notions of black underachievement. Judging by the child’s eventual success, however, one could not

¹ Date: 8-10-2006

² Family profiled in Appendix

³ Date: 14-1-2007

rule out the possibility that the teacher's underestimation of the child's potential was influenced by preconceptions about 'black youth'. But when the issue emerged in a separate interview in South West London¹ a different point of view emerged to suggest that such issues were contentious:

I think that people have to be careful when making judgements about being black because you're a minority. Some people would say 'I didn't get the job, must be because I'm black'. 'Because of the way the man looked at me or he was rude to me because I'm black'. It may be because he is a rude person. 'He didn't let me cross the road just now, he was about to run me over, must be because I'm black'. No, it might just be he is an angry person, or he would have done it to anyone. They (teachers) may push a pupil into sports or whatever because they actually think s/he would do well there. Being pushed to become a doctor or a lawyer is part of my experience but I don't think it's because you're black. I went to a school where they were overly excited about everyone going to a top university in the country, but I don't think they held me back because I was black. They treated everyone the same regardless of the colour that we were (Ms. Akweley, aged 28, lawyer)

These are examples of the speculative mental attitudes that racism sometimes provoked. Even in situations where 'race' played no role racism retained a phantom presence featuring in the subjects' reading and interpretation of social encounters. The lingering question 'is it because I'm black' may be a rhetorical question that interrogated the phantom of racism, or put racism on trial in absentia. It was not always easy to separate fact from misconstrued perception, or discount colour prejudice altogether. Learning to discern or negotiate such issues was part of the black experience and shows how racism always cast a long shadow.

5.7: Colour-coding of crime:

In the 1990's, the then Metropolitan Commissioner of Police, Sir Paul Condon, made statements to the effect that a minority of young black men were responsible for a disproportionate amount of street crime in the capital. This was widely reported in the media and caused controversy, not least because it was seen as a selective use of statistics to criminalise a whole race and to reinforce prejudice in the public mind. As some critics pointed out, a similar profile of crimes committed by whites such as burglary², was not announced to the public in the same manner. But the result was an association of blacks with crime in general in the public imagination. Sir Paul Condon

¹ Date of interview: 18-1-2007, Thornton Heath, South West London.

² According to statistics attributed to police sources by sections of the media, over 90% of burglaries were committed by whites.

had until then had an impeccable record in office and on race issues. To all intents and purposes the statement was made in good faith but ill-advised. It was suggested in some quarters that it was intended to prepare the public ahead of a targeted clampdown on mugging so that police action would not be interpreted as racist. But it had the opposite effect. Coming from a senior figure in the state apparatus it had serious implications. Not only did it reinforce the association of blacks with crime in general, in the public mind, it also represented the symbolic use of power through discourse to differentiate and exteriorise an identifiable group and cast them as deviants.¹

For Ghanaians such representations of blackness presented an identity conundrum involving pride in their blackness and repudiation of the negative attributions concomitant with the monolithic construct of blackness. This involved withdrawing into an in-group Ghanaian identity mode that exteriorised other black identities and thereby externalised the negative stereotypes extended to them. But this meant falling into the trap of imputing the negative stereotypes to other blacks within the constellation of black identities, rather than challenging the racial stereotyping. As is evident from responses cited elsewhere in this chapter, there was a widespread perception that Afro-Caribbean youth provided the negative stereotypes by which all blacks in Britain were characterised.

5.8: ‘Black-on-black’ crime:

The term emerged in the media as a description for violent crimes committed by black people in which the victims were also black. As ‘black-on-black-crime’ featured in media reports, the subjects were invited to engage with the issue. In this extract, the discussion of the issue and inferences to ‘black’ delinquency by two adult females² provides an example of how some of the subjects grappled with such issues.

Doris aged 39:

This black on black crime, it’s escalating. I think it’s come down to a younger age group now. They are insecure. They start well in primary school. By the time they ... It’s also fear, which is why they get into gangs. Besides, there are

¹ This recalls Van Dijk’s conclusion that negative attributions are made in reference to outgroups as a way of differentiating the ingroup by positive attributes, and that this was reflected in news production.

² Extracts of interview recorded on the 16-12-2006

Ardee, a nurse and mother, aged 51, and Doris aged 32 both female, were members of a (Ghanaian) sub-ethnic group welfare association. Doris was raised in London and had a London accent but could also communicate in the Ga language.

no male role models. No male authority figures at home. Irresponsible fathers...

Ardee aged 51:

It's also peer pressure that makes them conform ... Black men fear responsibility. I know from the work I do (as a nurse) that when women have children men are involved but you don't see them. So where are the men?

Doris:

Some women want to have a child whether they are in a relationship or not.

Ardee:

Back home if you have a child, at the naming ceremony usually the man is always identified: "this is the father of the baby" and he has to be involved in the life of the child. Over here it can be the other way round. They don't necessarily have the man involved in anyway. They just have the child and that is it.

Doris:

The women also must take some of the responsibility. Say if you are going to get involved with someone who ... each time you have a child the man is not around ... She feels that she can bring up the child by herself. But she can't be both mother and father to the child.

A discussion of black-on-black-crime quickly becomes an attempted diagnosis involving the circumstances of some children and a critique of gender attitudes and responsibility in sections of the black community; a female take on the issue which more or less reflected current discourse on such issues. Significantly, the discussion was based on media reports and social discourse and on the basis of which they had developed individual opinions on such matters. Again, there was an implicit dissociation with black deviance. This was backed up with a reference to their traditional social structures and an affirmation of their values; an emphasis on positive attributes that distinguished them from certain black groups who may be spawning a generation of delinquents. In another interview a similar opinion was expressed around the perception that dysfunctional families were prevalent in a particular segment of the black community and not applicable to all black people:

I don't want to name any group, but I think the incidences of having children outside of proper stable relationships is prevalent in a particular section of the black community. And the government's policies are not helpful and rather support that kind of lifestyle because when they have a child then they are given a Council flat and access to benefits and things like that. With that there is no real responsibility for the man. The women want to have children and they do so with the men for others to bear the cost of raising the child. Some black men don't want to work and have an irresponsible attitude to life. They like all this gangster stuff. When you watch some of these black urban films you don't get any sense of the head or tail of the story; dressed in big long fur

coats and hats, that kind of thing. And the influence is spreading with the glamourised violence. (Auntie Dei, Civil Servant, aged 59)¹

As already noted the premise of such opinions was more or less media-generated, on the basis of which there was an acceptance of some form of 'black' delinquency which the subjects imputed to other black identities and thus exonerated their immediate in-group (Ghanaians) by dissociation, which was also a refutation of the one-size-fits-all characterisation of blackness.

Younger subjects shared the sense of difference from other black identities, but some were less nuanced in expressing it. A female teenage participant in a group interview² was quite blunt on this issue:

Ohenewa aged 17:

Because some blacks have been involved in killing as soon as they hear there's been a murder somewhere, they would probably think that was done by a black person and everyone gets stereotypical. We should be realistic. I think so-called black crime is committed by Jamaicans. But 'black' is a broad term and includes Africans and others. In my opinion Ghanaians are different. They are gentle and not very aggressive. They are in-between. But Jamaicans are more aggressive. They make a big thing out of everything. Even in church if I stepped on her toes she would try to slap me.

This was consistent with the perception mentioned earlier that Afro-Caribbeans provided the media stereotypes of 'black deviance' and reflects the 'self' and 'other' differentiations within the black family with material from the media and experiences from social contact.

Some young subjects also queried the racial differentiation of crime that set blacks apart as a separate category. Exasperated 16 year old schoolgirl, Natasha queried:³

But how can they say *black-on-black-crime* but they don't say *white-on-white-crime*. They act like Black people are so different

The absence of an equivalent 'white on white' category in media and official discourses for crimes committed by whites on their fellow whites is revealing. Perhaps 'black-on-black' may have been considered useful in assuaging the fears of white society, but it also reinforced the association of blacks with crime in the popular

¹ Interviewed 26-12-2006

² Group interview recorded on 8-1-2007. Notting Hill Gate, West London

³ Participant in group interview, conducted: 8-1-2007. Notting Hill Gate, West London

imagination. The London Metropolitan Police, for instance, instituted ‘Operation Trident’, a special unit to tackle the so-called Black-on-Black gun violence separately from other gun crimes. While the intention of tackling the serious issue of gun violence made sense, racialising the discourse around it reveals the preoccupation of the white establishment with ‘race’ and constructs of groups. Gun crime was not the preserve of blacks¹, but the labelling gave the impression that it was. But such examples show how officialdom produced racial discourses that defined and exteriorised the coloured ‘other’, perhaps unwittingly, despite the apparent commitment to multiracialism and integration in British society underpinned by egalitarian legislation. The continued production of discourses that emphasised racial difference suggested an entrenched race-consciousness that could be understood as a vestige of the ‘orientalising’ mind-set which regarded Blackness as a problem that required a special focus. Blackness seemed like a separate homogeneous category within the nation. Arguably, this was the essence of institutional racism cited by the McPherson Report on the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry² which concluded that the Metropolitan Police was institutionally racist³. Institutions reflect the societies and ideological structures in which they are formed. Thus the invention of the term ‘*Black-on-Black*’ is an example of how racial distinctions dominated institutional thinking and sustained the salience of ‘race’ in society.

5.9: Perceived media portrayal of blacks:

There was a general acknowledgement among the subjects that the news⁴ about black people was not great, but this was attributed to a selective and censorious white gaze:

White people do the same things but whenever we do things there is a sort of magnifying effect on it. There was a time when they were profiling muggers as young black men. I feel if they want to do that that’s alright. But how come they don’t do that for all the crimes. So when they talk about paedophiles why don’t they say it’s usually white males or blah blah? That’s why I have a problem with that. If they are gonna do things like that then be consistent

¹ News coverage of the conviction of Grant Wilkinson, a white man who operated an underworld gun factory linked to 52 shootings. Source: METRO Newspaper, Date: 28-8-2008

² Stephen Lawrence, aged 17, was stabbed to death by a gang of white youths in Eltham in London. His case became a cause celebre when police failed to investigate his death properly despite tip-offs, presumably because he was black, and despite the public naming of the suspects no one was convicted.

³ The notion of institutional racism embodied all institutional processes that resulted in the maintenance of racial inequality, also understood as what white people do to maintain the benefits that their race confers on them (see Back, 1999: 162). For more on Institutional Racism see Appendix ‘D’

⁴ The general perception among the subjects was that news about black people often focussed on negativity (see chapter 9)

across the board. Don't just stop with the black people. They are not consistent and they try and justify these things. And if the logic is alright then I say why not apply that logic to everything that you are doing. But they don't so that is why it is a racist thing (Kwaaley, female, manager, aged 37)¹

Similar sentiments were common and were expressed in different ways:

Unfortunately *they* show *us* when *we* do something bad isn't it? *They* don't often do the same when it's something good. Even if *they* do, it's only shown for just two seconds. (Ardee, nurse, mother, aged 51)²

It is significant that respondents used the phrases *they* and *us* as a taken-for-granted expression of the power indexed racial configurations of society – the unequal power relations between the white establishment (*they*), including those who controlled the media systems and exercised powers of representation, on one hand, and '*us*' referring to black people, subjectively portrayed, on the other. And having their identity represented in terms of deviance and transgression, metaphorically and literally, was disempowering. This was the perception of young respondents as well. Commenting on the representation of blacks, Korkor from the *Streatham Vale Family* noted:³

Sometimes they present us like poor people mainly and aggressive and troublesome – black youth. So they present us like we're not just like everybody else. So sometimes the representation is unfair (Korkor, aged 16)

In similar vein, in an interview, the issue of representation of blacks drew the following observations from two sisters from the *Thornton Heath Family*⁴ Akweley, aged 28, a lawyer and Ago, aged 25:

Akweley:

Because you are in an ethnic minority group anything that you do is going to give an impression though there are loads of people doing the same thing. The news isn't fantastic but people who focus on the minority groups have focussed their minds on something that's different. On the news when they talk about ASBOs⁵ they talk about crime in areas and people knocking on people's windows and smashing windows and stuff. It's not black people they are talking about. They go to other areas in the country and they focus on young white men standing round in the streets, throwing bricks at people. When you think about it there's loads of that going on as well. I don't think people, (I may be wrong), that people are more intimidated by a group of young black men standing with their hoods on, or a group of white men standing with their hoods on.

¹ Date interviewed: 12-12-2006

² Date: 16-12-2006

³ Date interviewed: 1-10-2006 (Streatham Vale Family home)

⁴ Interviewed: 18-1-2007, Thornton Heath, South West London

⁵ Acronym for Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBO)

Ago:

I think because they are ethnic minority, they'll show the ones in London, and they tend to be black

Akweley:

So it's percentages again. Outside of London they're not black. You don't hear white people getting together saying "oh my God, these white youths, they're giving white people a bad name".

As pointed out in this dialogue, black people were concentrated in London, but outside of London where there were hardly any blacks. TV footage confirmed that white youths were responsible for all the trouble for which ASBOs were frequently issued. Such crimes were not represented in terms of colour, but would have been if black youths had been responsible. Such a perspective does not dispute claims about 'black crime'. Most of the subjects believed in the news stories and felt uncomfortable about the collective association of blacks with crime. What this perspective brought up was the focus on black wrongdoing as a focus on difference. And this tendency was also institutional and not restricted to the media.

5.10: Articulating a positive (black) Ghanaian identity

As indicated earlier the subjects' sense of who they were was at variance with the perceptions of blackness they encountered, usually involving notions of deviance. In the effort to redefine their identity they cited and validated their traditional values and practices to distinguish their blackness from the stereotypes. Against the pathological labels on black families they referred to their traditional social structures and values. In the interview extract on black-on-black-crime cited earlier Madam Ardee (aged 51) refers to the naming ceremony 'back home' after the birth of a baby which usually included mentioning the father of the baby, which therefore ensured that having been identified, he has to take responsibility and be involved in the life of the child. She suggests that this served as a foil against the 'absent father syndrome' which was apparently prevalent among a certain section of the black community in Britain. They also addressed the discursive criminalising of blackness in discourses on black crime by referring to some of the factors that inhibited crime in traditional Ghanaian communities such as kinship ties, taboos, and age-old beliefs, despite such systems being undermined by modernity and urbanisation. Father of four, Opoku, made reference to beliefs which deterred crime in certain contexts:

Traditionally most black Africans from my 'home' region for instance refrained from stealing out of fear of being cursed. Where we come from people believed in the power of curses. The victim of a crime such as theft could pronounce a curse that would afflict the perpetrator and his family. Such beliefs are quite strong in some traditional areas like where I come from, to the extent that it serves as a deterrent against stealing. (Mr. Opoku aged 51)¹

Similar forms of rebuttal appealed to traditions as in this interview:

In our culture when a baby is born, at the naming ceremony s/he is symbolically instructed to lead a morally good life and not to misbehave. The baby is introduced to a moral code of *do's* and *don'ts*. You are given commandments as a baby, such as, "don't tell lies, don't steal", etc. S/he is supposed to abstain from wrongdoing as s/he grows up, and so early in life it is cautioned against misconduct. But every nation or people group has its criminals, deviants etc. There are some types of behaviour that are linked to poverty. Occasionally when a member of a group is caught in some wrongdoing, it stigmatises the whole group and everyone is smeared (Papa Kojo, aged 60)²

This was a reference to the outdoor ceremony (bringing the baby outdoors) that Ghanaians perform at dawn, a week after the birth of a baby, to formally welcome it into the family and to introduce it to relatives and relations.³ In the ceremonies moral values are reiterated and blessings pronounced on the newborn baby, usually by a respected elder with high moral standing whose exemplary character, it was hoped, would somehow rub-off on the child. Such re-enactments of customary practices were not universally practiced. Some families chose to celebrate childbirth differently, opting for a Christianised version of the outdoor ceremony that mimicked the traditional format in some ways, but where the pouring of libation was replaced by Christian prayers led by a pastor at the home of the parents or in a church dedication. Others had a normal christening ceremony some weeks or months after the birth of the baby followed by a celebration. Christian values are intertwined with the traditional value system of Ghanaians.

Traditions and beliefs alone do not mean a total eradication of crime. The fact of a functioning criminal justice system back in Ghana suggests that people continued to break the law just like everywhere else in the world, although incidences of crime were much lower in traditional communities than in urban areas. However, this

¹ Old Kent Road Family, interviewed 26-1-2007

² Joint interview of Papa Kojo and Niikoi, traditionalists, conducted at Thornton Heath, S.W. London. Date: 17-1-2007. The term '*traditionalist*' is used in this sense for those who advocated a greater role and respect for traditional practices and led by example.

³ The outdoor ceremony is mentioned again under the theme of *naming* in chapter 6

reference to traditional values and beliefs and their social efficacy interrogates notions of a predisposition to crime that set blacks apart, as purveyed in homogenised and pathologised representations of blackness from white perspectives. This counter discourse that appeals to tradition also interrogates the linear, progressivist, and universalist assumptions about modernity, which was supposed to liberate the traditional subject from a fixed status, mired in predefined social roles to pursue a plethora of modern roles and functions, where identity becomes more mobile, multiple, personal, self reflexive and subject to change and innovation. However, now there is a realisation that ‘the promise of modernity to deliver order, certainty and security will remain unfulfilled’ (Smart, 1993: 27). This was in recognition of the fact that modernity’s political and epistemological limits had been reached; its master narratives had been questioned; its inherent cultural contradictions were now accentuated. In many ways Ghanaian-Londoners were modern subjects and benefitted from its institutions and the mobility and opportunities that it has engendered in the world. Nevertheless some Ghanaian traditional beliefs and practices have retained their relevance and coexist with modern institutions that were supposed to replace them. The injunctions, taboos, rituals¹ and communal spirit of traditional ways offer a tempering influence on the excesses of modernity and its socially disintegrative individualism.

5.11: Summary and Conclusions

- ***Encountering racial characterisation & black consciousness:*** Consciousness of the subjects’ black identity was heightened by the salience of race, racial discourses, and the racial structuring of society. This was a different experience from their homeland where ‘race’ had no such salience on account of racial homogeneity. Epithets such as Black-British, Black youth, and Black-on-Black were a constant reminder of racial categorisation and profiling. The

¹ Incidentally, there is in certain quarters a belief in the necessity of traditional rites in the modern world. In a column in the Metro newspaper, (Monday 26-11-2007), correspondent John Higginson reported a role-model training programme to be run in the UK by the Afro-Caribbean organisation - Institute for Rites of Passage UK, which offers disillusioned black youngsters a support system based on an African cultural tradition which aims to help youths develop into responsible adults. A similar programme is said to operate successfully in America. It is premised on the belief that ‘black crime’, gang culture and black underachievement are a direct consequence of missing out on the transition from adolescence to adulthood. Implicit in such initiatives is the recognition of the enduring consequences, in the Black Atlantic Diaspora, of the cultural disjuncture and erasure that slavery inflicted on its black victims.

characterisation of blackness they encountered in Britain was constructed from the perspectives of the white ‘other’ and derived from notions of blackness as the antithesis of whiteness and was therefore negatively indexed. Projections from specific microcosms of urban black identities served as a basis for a homogenised construct of blackness that ignored black diversity. The parochial stereotypes usually had no redeeming features, except for black sporting prowess and entertainment value. Even when Africa was included, it was characterised by the censorious gaze of Euro-American otherness.

- ***Repudiating negative stereotypes:*** The prevailing construct of blackness impinged on the experiences of Ghanaian-Londoners in various contexts of social interaction and prompted a re-valuation and validation of their traditional values as a way to positively reaffirm their identity and to differentiate themselves from the negative stereotypes. They made efforts to re-institute their traditions (ceremonies, festivals, etc) in the new environment, and transmit their moral codes and social norms to their children.
- ***Voices of Tradition:*** The subjects’ responses to the dominant discourses by which they were constructed as blacks represented an alternative discourse. But theirs were voices from the margins which spoke the language of tradition, caution, and restraint. And their expressions were whispers compared to the far-reaching dominant discourses which fed the popular imagination. However, such marginal voices were a reminder not just of the diversity of black identities, which was often glossed over, but of the continuing relevance and/ or preference for certain traditional practices in the modern world, albeit in a complementary role which challenges the dichotomising of ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’.
- ***Strategic identification:*** The fact that the motley groups of black peoples were defined by their racial identity from a perspective of otherness served as an axis around which black solidarity coalesced, and empowerment was naturally derived from the dynamic of identification with kind. In that regard Ghanaians overlooked any differences they had with other black ethnicities as they embraced their common black identity. This sense of corporate identity felt among blacks, and the streams of sentiment that flowed from it, fed into political and social justice

campaigns which over the years have helped to address the concerns of black peoples, thereby underscoring the significance of strategic identification.

- ***Experiencing black unity and diversity:*** The diasporic experience brought them into contact with various black and other identities. They learned about other blacks through personal contact and media stereotypes. The media also facilitated a pan-global imagination of blackness. The vicarious or symbolic engagement with ('participation') the distant political events across the Atlantic involving blacks in the US, issued from their identity as black people constructed around common origins, shared concerns, hopes and aspirations. In different contexts they alternated between assuming their corporate black identity and differentiating themselves from other blacks on the basis of a separate ethnic or national identity. Similarly, they learned about whites through social contact and media portrayals of white culture.
- ***Issues of Identity:*** Their sense of identity involved the multifaceted intertwining of ethnic, racial and national identities. Even with Britain-born Ghanaians there was ambivalence over their British identity, which was often challenged by racism. This was summed up in the category 'Black-British' which suggested that blackness was indissoluble in the presumed colour of Britishness and belonged in a separate (Black-British) category. They could otherwise have been simply British. It may be inferred that the circumstances that produced the slogan '*there ain't no black in the Union Jack*' still persisted, but in a different form and the contestations over citizenship and belonging were not yet over.
- ***Psychological sanctuary in identity:*** Mediation brought awareness of potential or actual risks including food-related diseases. Their attitude was either to dismiss the threats as exaggerations, or to refer to their cultural practices as a defence mechanism. These included cooking methods that sterilised their food and supposedly provided protection against food-borne diseases. Whether such suppositions had any merits or not, they constituted a coping mechanism against perceived threats. Thus, when confronted with risks and threats beyond their control, the Ghanaian subjects sought psychological sanctuary in practices, beliefs, myths and ontological assumptions linked to their biological and cultural identity.

CHAPTER 6

THE GHANAIAN DIASPORA COMMUNITY IN LONDON

Chapter Outline

1. Pictorial narratives
2. Introduction
3. Historical Overview & Demographics
4. Population, distribution, and occupations of Ghanaians in London
5. Ghanaian enterprises
6. Adapting to the built environment
7. Adapting family structures
8. Significance of Objects (interior decoration)
9. Festivals:
10. Ghanaian churches in London
11. Cultural adaptation and syncretisation
 - Language – applications and implications
 - Naming (structures, adoptions, and significances)
 - Food cultures & identity
 - Clothing/ Fashion and Style (body decoration & presentation)
 - Intergenerational cultural transmission (exchange)
 - Music cultures
12. Screen cultures:
 - Uses and Significance of TV among Ghanaian-Londoners:
 - Family viewing
 - TV programmes and integration into the national viewing culture & identity:
 - Television and identity-related simultaneous experience:
 - Ghanaian community media
13. Conclusion

Pictorial narratives:

Symbolic representations



Queen Elizabeth II welcomes the president of Ghana during Ghana's 50th independence anniversary in 2007. [Picture reproduced by courtesy of Ghanaweb.com (2007)]

This visit by the Ghanaian president is symbolic in many respects. The picture may be considered as a metaphorical representation of the relationship between Britain and Ghana, the latter as an offspring birthed as a modern nation under the auspices of the British colonial empire, coming of age, post-independence, with some of its nationals being hosted in the United Kingdom, represented symbolically by the motherly figure of the British monarch, head of the Commonwealth of Nations, welcoming President John Kuffuor of Ghana. The contrast in ceremonial dressing also reflects the juxtaposition of the two cultural representations; the Ghanaian leader in his colourful ceremonial Kente cloth and sandals in the presence of Her Royal Highness (HRH), the Queen, may be considered as a representation of the Ghanaian cultural presence in Britain. The underlying theme of the Ghanaian diasporic presence in Britain, and the implications of their sojourn, is subsequently explored in this thesis.

Heritage: Transmitting cultural emblems to a younger generation



Girls ceremonial costume proudly displaying the beauty and splendour of Ghanaian traditional costume during the 50th anniversary celebrations of Ghana's modern nation status in London.



Young Ghanaians take up the heritage mantle



Boy in resplendent regal ceremonial costume replete with pieces of gold jewellery (diadems, crowns, nuggets bracelets etc.) which reflect the aesthetic and symbolic use of gold as a valued gem. Ghana was previously named the Gold Coast on account of its rich gold deposits by European traders and colonists who named areas by their products: *'Ivory Coast'*, *'Pepper Coast'*, and *'Slave Coast'* among others. Also, *'bling'* (extravagant jewellery) in contemporary Black popular culture usually identified with pop artistes, may have had its origins in African ceremonial jewellery of this nature. [Pictures by courtesy of justshoot.co.uk – Ghana's 50th]

Face of the future: resourcing a redefined identity



In these pictures modern black hairstyle (frizzled and wavy) is combined with traditional beads around the neck and wrists and Ghanaian design fabrics. This represents the cultural face of a younger generation of Ghanaian-Londoners, drawing on Ghanaian cultural aesthetics to fashion a new (merged) identity in Britain. The new identity incorporates elements from their parents' culture and other contemporary cultural storehouses. [Pictures by courtesy of justshoot.co.uk Ghana's 50th anniversary in London]



6.0: Introduction:

The goal of this chapter is to attempt a portrait of the dynamic Ghanaian presence in London that reflects their active engagement with its multi-stranded environment. The previous discussion of the black diaspora outlined one of the macrocosmic contexts in which the study is conceived. It traced the historical and political development of Pan-global black identity from its origins in Africa through the harsh trans-Atlantic experiences, and the struggles for black emancipation from subjugation, to present-day experiences and politics of blackness, the rising profile of blacks in mainstream society and politics in the US and UK, and black influences on global popular culture. The discussion of the unity and diversity of blackness serves as a backdrop to the understanding of the Ghanaian diaspora as an aspect of the global, heterogeneous, and dynamic black entity. This chapter, therefore, situates the collectivity of Ghanaians in London as an emergent specimen of yet evolving black diasporic identities. The portrait locates the community within a framework that integrates prevailing concepts of ‘blackness’ as well as ‘diasporas’. Being a diaspora also locates it within another global phenomenon of the modern era – the flow of peoples and the relocation and development of identifiable communities away from their original homeland.¹

6.1: Historical Overview & Demographics

6.1.1: A *brief historical overview*:

Ghana² in West Africa, the homeland of the Ghanaian diaspora, was formerly known as the Gold Coast before it attained its political independence from Britain in 1957. A multi-ethnic nation with a population currently estimated at 24 million people, it became a British colony in the aftermath of the scramble for, and partitioning of Africa by European colonial powers. In 1960 roughly 100 linguistic and cultural groups were identified and recorded in Ghana. The major ethnic groups include the Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbane, Guan, and Ga-Dangbe.³

After independence in 1957 emigration to Europe was initially dominated by state-sponsored students, part of a programme of education of the future elite abroad, to prepare them for important positions in the society (Clignet and Foster, 1965).

¹ For a detailed discussion of diasporas see chapter 2

² The name Ghana was adopted on account of its historical reference to the ancient Ghana Empire which flourished in West Africa in the 10th and 11th centuries.

³ www.Ghanaweb.com – Date 3/5/2008

Economic and political crises¹ from the 1960's onwards stimulated many Ghanaians to emigrate. Political refugees fleeing from the PNDC² regime in the 1980s also sought sanctuary abroad. In the 1990's it was estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of Ghanaians (corresponding to between 2 and 4 million) were living abroad (Peil, 1995). The exodus comprised teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, and students, and was justifiably regarded as 'brain drain'. Generally, western countries were the preferred destinations, but many went to neighbouring Nigeria³ in the early 1980s. Ghanaian communities emerged in countries such as Britain, Canada, USA, Germany, Netherlands, Italy and others. Trade relations with the Ghanaian diaspora and remittances have since become important for the Ghanaian economy. In 2000 a conservative estimate of the value of remittances was between \$300 and \$400 million⁴, the fourth largest source of foreign exchange for the Ghanaian economy, after cocoa, gold and tourism. The umbilical relationship with Britain as the erstwhile colonial master was a factor that drew a significant number of Ghanaians to the United Kingdom.

6.1.2: Population, distribution, and occupations of Ghanaians in London:

The Ghanaian population in the UK is mostly concentrated in London. Historically, Ghanaians have been living in London for over 500 years.⁵ According to the 2001 population census figures, Ghanaians numbered 46,513 and ranked ninth in the largest twenty five groups born outside Britain and living in London (Mackintosh, 2005)⁶. Allowing for the number of undocumented Ghanaians in London would increase the estimates. It is recognised that since the formal independence of Ghana in 1957, the Ghanaian population in London has grown considerably, but the estimates do not exceed 500,000.⁷ The Ghana High Commission in London also estimates that the number of people in Britain who have links with Ghana totals about one million.⁸

¹ The traumas of nascent nationhood, coupled with drought, famine, economic difficulties and political instability, created emigration pressures.

² PNDC - the abbreviation for Provisional National Defence Council. A book titled *Death and Pain: Rawlings' Ghana - the Inside Story*, by Mike Adjei, details some of the excesses of this era.

³ In the early 1980s as a result of the Nigerian oil fuelled economic boom, there was an exodus of Ghanaians to Nigeria which ended with the repatriation of Ghanaians from Nigeria in 1983.

⁴ Corporate Ghana, May, 2004

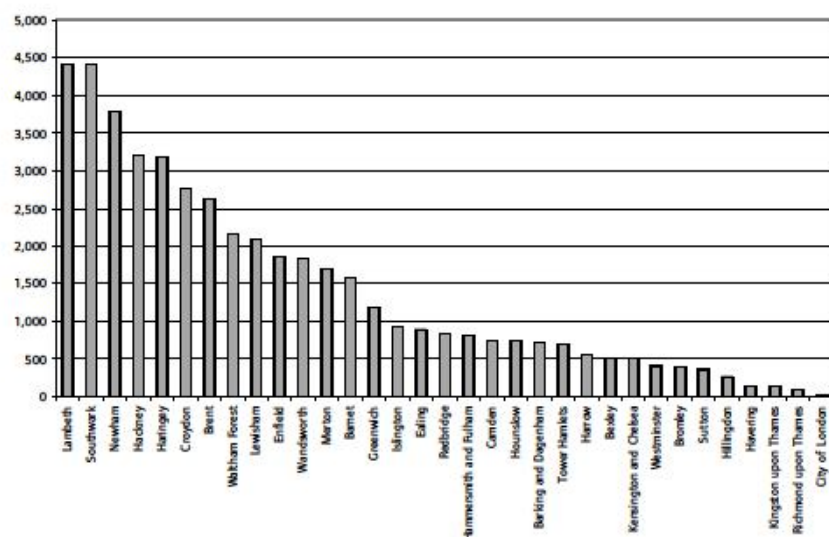
⁵ <http://www.untoldlondon.org.uk/news/ART47250.html>

⁶ See Census figures, charts, facts and figures in Appendix 'B'

⁷ <http://www.untoldlondon.org.uk/news/ART47250.html>

⁸ (http://www.pioneer-news.com/reports/ghana/report_ghanap6.html)

London residents born in Ghana



Borough	Number of residents	Percentage of London total	Borough	Number of residents	Percentage of London total
City of London	25	0.1	Kensington and Chelsea	501	1.1
Barking and Dagenham	718	1.5	Kingston upon Thames	137	0.3
Barnet	1,578	3.4	Lambeth	4,421	9.5
Bexley	501	1.1	Lewisham	2,080	4.5
Brent	2,641	5.7	Merton	1,693	3.6
Bromley	386	0.8	Newham	3,776	8.1
Camden	754	1.6	Redbridge	831	1.8
Croydon	2,764	5.9	Richmond upon Thames	89	0.2
Ealing	889	1.9	Southwark	4,410	9.5
Enfield	1,844	4.0	Sutton	359	0.8
Greenwich	1,197	2.6	Tower Hamlets	696	1.5
Hackney	3,209	6.9	Waltham Forest	2,162	4.6
Hammersmith and Fulham	809	1.7	Wandsworth	1,831	3.9
Haringey	3,184	6.8	Westminster	409	0.9
Harrow	561	1.2			
Havering	139	0.3			
Hillingdon	259	0.6			
Hounslow	729	1.6			
Islington	931	2.0			
			Inner London Total	27,036	58.1
			Outer London Total	19,477	41.9
			London Total	46,513	100.0

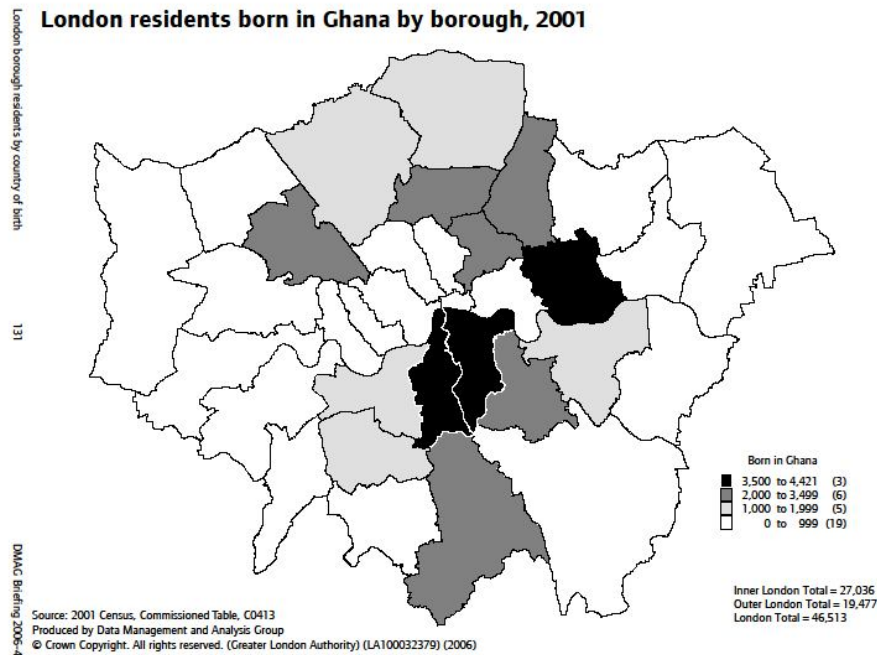
Source: 2001 Census, Commissioned Table, C0413

London borough residents by country of birth

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DMAG Briefing 2006-4

This set of detailed facts and figures on Ghanaians in London obtained from official UK government sources have an added significance. They confirm the presence of a significant number of people of Ghanaian birth dwelling across London. These and other sources corroborate the premise of an identifiable Ghanaian diaspora in London on which this study is based.



(Data obtained by courtesy of Greater London Assembly (mayoral publications)
Supplementary data from the same source is provided in Appendix 'B').

The charts and map (above) produced from the 2001 census¹ indicate the levels of concentration of Ghanaians across various London boroughs. Lambeth and Southwark showed the highest concentrations, followed by Newham, Hackney, Haringey, Croydon, Brent, with significant population concentrations, and others, in order of diminishing concentration. The city of London (Central London) had the least number of residents of Ghanaian birth.² Places such as *Seven Sisters* in Tottenham with a high high Ghanaian population have Ghanaian shops and businesses operating alongside their Asian and Afro-Caribbean counterparts along the West Green Road and the Tottenham High Road. The nearby *Broadwater Farm Estate* also has substantial numbers of Ghanaians and their languages (especially Akan) are often heard on the Estate. Beyond these core concentrations the Ghanaian population is spread across London.

¹ Source: Greater London Assembly (Mayor' publications - statistics department).

Further demographic profile of Ghanaians in London is provided in Appendix 'D'

² Two Ghanaian languages (Akan and Ga) were listed among the 150 foreign languages that the 999 emergency services needed to translate. Their figures put the number of Akan speakers concentrated in Haringey borough at 27,000 and Ga speakers, mostly in Lambeth at 3,700 raising the overall total to over 31,000 (Mark Prigg and Elizabeth Hopkirk, Evening Standard, 25 June 2004). These figures exclude Ghanaians who could speak English who formed the overwhelming majority.

Clusters of particular ethnic groups in certain areas of London are a feature of the city's ethnic landscape. Marie Gillespie (1995), for instance, drew attention to the concentration of Punjabi Indians in Southall where a sense of community-of-kind had been created. By comparison, the pockets of concentration of Ghanaians have not attained the same levels of concentration and cannot be described in similar terms, where kinship appears to be coterminous with locality and may therefore be referred to as 'territorial community'. As the instances of the randomly selected Ghanaian family samples in this study indicate, they shared neighbourhoods with various other nationalities and did not stand out as a territorially clustered ethnic community. The location of the families is also a fair reflection of the fact that Ghanaians mostly live outside of Central London (inner London zone 1).

Kariuko Kondo's (2006) study of the Japanese overseas community in London drew attention to a structural relationship between the occupational circumstances of their relocation and the nature of the Japanese communities that consequently developed in London.¹ Enjoying the patronage of the major companies which sent them abroad, and the support of the Japanese government, the experience of Japanese families enjoying corporate sponsorship stands in stark contrast to Ghanaians in London whose relocation was driven by economic, political and social factors of a different kind - by individual circumstances and motivations to seek a better life, furthering their education as students, or as political refugees fleeing from the military dictatorship of the 1980's. This meant a dependence on kinship networks for support in many cases. Ghanaians arriving in London therefore tended to gravitate towards relatives and friends² already established in London, benefiting from the support of their hosts' social networks to find jobs and settle. This tendency to gravitate towards kith and kin would explain the concentrations of Ghanaians in certain London boroughs.

Occupationally, again, in contrast to the Japanese sojourners, Ghanaians, on arrival, take up jobs at the lower end of the jobs market for which those with good educational

¹ The '*chuzai-in*' (employees who were sent abroad) were high-skilled migrants, generally educated middle class with affluent full-time housewives. Japanese schools provided for their children, became an important factor in the sojourners' settlement in London because the Japanese sojourners who had children tended to live around the school, developing a community feeling with the replication of some Japanese cultural attributes (Kondo, 2006 PhD Thesis).

² Students tend to live within proximity of their chosen institutions

qualifications are deemed to be overqualified, underscoring the ‘brain-drain’ inherent in the migration from their homeland. All the adult respondents¹ in this study had the experience of working in such places as factories, restaurants, care homes, as mini-cab drivers, supermarket assistants, in security and cleaning jobs. Eventually they moved up the jobs market, into professions like accountancy, law, teaching and the civil service, as the occupations of the respondents in this study indicate. Besides, those with a business edge ventured into small retail or other enterprises.

6.2: Structuring existential space - Ghanaian enterprises and institutions:

Evidence of a thriving community could be observed in the emergence of Ghanaian restaurants, shops, hair and beauty saloons, shipping/ freight services, estate development agencies catering to the need for second homes in Ghana, (a feature of the dual-locationality of Ghanaians abroad), UK branches of Ghanaian political parties, churches, and various Ghanaian associations, in various parts of London. Also, individuals of Ghanaian parentage have emerged in public life in Britain². Besides, various events now feature in the annual calendar of Ghanaian occasions in London. These include Ghana’s independence anniversary celebrations, festivals, annual summertime picnics³, food and funfairs, dinner-dance occasions and youth events.

Edward Relph (1976) notes how space is claimed by naming it and places are humanised by naming them. He also cites Jackuetta Hawkes’ observation that ‘place names are among the things that link men most intimately with their territory’ (Relph 1976: 16). The naming of places and regions is part of a fundamental structuring of existential space.⁴

¹ There were many more cases that the researcher knew about.

² Individuals of Ghanaian parentage who have emerged in public life in Britain include former Labour MP and cabinet minister, Paul Boateng, (currently British High Commissioner to South Africa), June Sarpong (TV presenter), Ekow Eshun (editor), Belinda Owusu, (actress in *EastEnders*), Freema Agyeman (actress in BBC’s *Dr Who* drama series and its spin-off *Torchwood*), Hugh Quarshie (actor who plays doctor in *Holby City*), Dizzie Rascal (rap artiste who won a Brit award), Ozwald Boateng (Saville Row designer for the stars) and many more including sportsmen and women.

³ *Anansekrom* at the Arsett Grounds in Grays in Essex and a similar event held at *Trent Park* in Arnos Grove in North London (see pictures). Such occasions draw crowds of Ghanaians and their friends from other nationalities to a mixture of picnic, games, live music and dance, food and fun-fair. Increasingly such events are being driven by commercialism, but are still significant events because of the renewal or affirmation of sense of identity and the visibility gained.

⁴ Names provide a sense of orientation, according to Relph. Reference is made to the example of how North America is sprinkled with the borrowed place names of Europe which once provided familiarity in an otherwise strange land (Lynch, cited in Relph, 1976: 17).

In line with this tendency, some Ghanaian entrepreneurs prefer to name their enterprises after place-names in Ghana, or to borrow the names of enterprises in Ghana. Ghanaian-owned shops in London such as *Kejetia Mini-Market*, *GNTC*¹, *Kumasi Central Market*, *Makola Market*, to name a few, were all named after markets and retail stores in Ghana, or as in the case of *Ashanti Grocery*, *Sankofa*, and *Ohemaa (African Queen)*, just to give such shops particular Ghanaian references. Such names serve as familiar points of reference and also draw the attention of fellow Ghanaian customers through this familiarity and the promise of products which offer a slice of 'home'. Besides, they remind people of the homeland and make them feel more at home in their new environment; a way of introducing familiarity into the strangeness and difference of their new place in London.

Ghanaian **shops and restaurants** have a greater significance than their function as business enterprises. They reveal the wants, tastes, desires, and consumption habits of their predominantly Ghanaian clientele. They serve as places of social interaction where old acquaintances sometimes bump into each other and reminisce about old times, and where new acquaintanceships develop. Conversation in Ghanaian vernacular is common, often involving political, economic, and social issues in Ghana.

Some shops are mini-markets, stocking everything conceivable, including various traditional Ghanaian household items such as earthenware utensils, wooden stirrers and grinders, brooms made from raffia palm, indigenous Ghanaian soap, fishnet sponges for bathing, chewing sticks and chewing sponges for oral/ dental hygiene purposes, kola nuts (chewed as a stimulant), shear butter (used as a skin balm and an antidote to dry skin), palm wine, and herbal remedies. Among other things they also stock a vast array of tropical food items like plantain and yam as well as salted, smoked, dried, or fried fish, and vegetables. The increasing variety of products of Ghanaian origins reflected the increasing commercial traffic between the diasporic community and their homeland.

¹ GNTC is an abbreviation for Ghana National Trading Company

Conversations with Ghanaian shoppers and shop owners¹ touched on issues such as the suitability and applicability in London of some of the more traditional items brought over from Ghana such as raffia palm brooms, given that vacuum cleaners and brushes would arguably be more effective, or the efficacy of chewing sticks and chewing sponges for dental hygiene when brushing with tooth paste would ostensibly be more effective, or why traditional grinders with wooden pestles were preferred to electric blenders, or why traditional herbal medicines were still popular.² Apparently for some, old habits and practices die hard and, together with the element of nostalgia, helped sustain the demand for traditional products, notwithstanding the availability of more efficient modern substitutes. Some users dispute the assertion that the modern substitutes are necessarily better, emphasising the efficacy of traditional products such as herbal remedies. Others said that they enjoyed certain foods better when they ate from the earthenware bowl and with their fingers rather than cutlery, which was unsuitable for a dish like the starchy *fufu*. Among those with traditional habits was respondent Mr. Peprah:

I used to have a calabash for consuming porridge. You can't beat the taste. I would shake the calabash to stir the porridge and lap it up. I enjoyed using that more than any other bowl or plate. I also have an earthenware grinder and a pestle which we sometimes use instead of an electric blender. For my kenkey and pepper meal, I prefer the mixed sauce of pepper, onions, and tomatoes prepared in the earthenware grinder the traditional way with the fish laid by the side in the earthenware. I would then have my calabash with a drink such as chilled Supermalt by the side. You can't beat that.
(Peprah, aged 51, barrister).³

Mr Odoi of the *Blackhorse Road Family* and respondents like Mr. Peprah were among those who espoused the efficacy of the chewing sponge for dental hygiene purposes (mouthwash). But it was used sparingly as a supplement to brushing with the regular modern brands of tooth paste. However, other respondents like Auntie Dei (civil

¹ Visits to Ghanaian shops were fairly regular before, during and after the fieldwork period. These were places patronised by Ghanaian, Nigerian and other West African shoppers in search of 'home' products. Shops run by Ghanaian proprietors continue to emerge in different parts of London. In North London they were concentrated in places such as Seven Sisters (along the West Green Road) with a few more located along the Tottenham High Road in places such as Bruce Grove and in Edmonton. In South London some Ghanaian shops were located in Brixton Market, Balham, Tooting Market, Clapham Junction and other places.

² Ironically, this was against the background of an influx of modern products from around the world into their homeland in Ghana.

³ Date of conversation: 11-11-2006

servant) were unimpressed and dismissive of the chewing sponge, and questioned its suitability in a typical London home, apart from the length of time it took to clean. But apart from items which divided opinion, there were more popular items with broad appeal. One such item with an enduring general appeal among Ghanaians at home and abroad (in Britain) is the nylon fishnet bath sponge. Adapted from its original purpose, it has long remained popular as the ideal, standard, durable, body-scrub. The mass appeal of this improvised bathing item has sustained a lucrative business in nylon fishnets far beyond its originally intended purpose.

The demand for such products, some of which are uniquely Ghanaian, is an indication of enduring tastes, preferences and attachments to certain 'homeland' commodities and practices that define and affirm the identity of the subjects. Besides, the coexistence and blending of the traditional and the modern tells a story of 'itinerant cultural practices' being adapted to new environments; of the transculturation that typifies the distinctive presence of 'little' Ghana in Great Britain.

6.3: Adapting to the built environment

Spatial architecture helps shape the lives of people. The architecture of a place may be enabling or confining. It also defines the sort of inter-personal space-time sharing that develops, and which transforms space into place. David Seamon (1979: 59) describes this as '*place ballet*'¹. Newman observed that physical design can enhance or hinder a person's sense of place and community. People develop relationships within a certain place that gives both place and people their mutual identities. Excessive rationalisation in the pursuit of order and purpose in the built environment has the tendency to undermine the significance of places, often through standardisation Newman (cited in Seamon, 1979: 65).²

¹ The phenomenological geographer, David Seamon uses ballet as a concept to express learned routines of people and places. '*Place ballet*' is defined as an interaction of many time-space routines and 'body ballets' rooted in space (Seamon, 1979: 54, 56). As habits and routines are conducted in a place (place ballet), eventually, place is experienced without deliberate and self-conscious reflection, yet is full of significances; place ballet means that space becomes place through inter-personal, space-time sharing (Seamon, 1979: 59). He describes '*body ballet*' as a set of integrated gestures and movements which sustain a particular task or aim, often an integral part of manual skill or artistic talent, like washing dishes or house-building.

² Newman had demonstrated how street patterns, hallway arrangements, physical barriers and other features of the environment can be used to facilitate what David Seamon termed 'place ballets' (Seamon, 1979: 65). Thus regular patterns of human activity and relationships in a location involve meaning production and invests place with significance.

Figures 1-4: Accessories: Displays of trinkets, beads, figurines, sculptures, and various items for body and home decoration, among a myriad of Ghanaian accessories that meet a demand for home products.



For Ghanaians, relocation also means adjusting to spatial organisation and architectural arrangements shaped by European climate, history and culture. The standardised approach to housing in Britain contrasts with the less stringent, laissez-fair approach to house building in Ghana where individuals usually built their own houses and indulged their preferences in style, or the lack of it, for better or worse. Granting that people are the product of their environment and are shaped by its structures, it is suggested here that the difference in approaches has implications for the micro-cultures that result in either case. In London the subjects are accommodated in flats or terraced houses, similar in style, and facing the street. The resulting sense of detachment from neighbours is exacerbated by the multinational composition of London's boroughs, engendering a sense of insularity. Interaction with neighbours varied from place to place, but generally contact with neighbours was minimal, and sometimes non-existent as people preferred to keep to themselves¹. The following experience, apart from reflecting the ethnic diversity, was one of the warmer experiences of neighbourliness encountered in the study:

My nearest neighbours are Irish, Japanese, Pakistanis, Chinese and lots of Indians in the area, a few blacks from Africa, the Caribbean, and Koreans. They are lovely people, I must say. Work commitments mean that there is hardly enough time to exchange pleasantries. So I think it's a question of time. If you have time you socialise more. My Irish neighbour sometimes comes round for a chat (Ms Ardee, aged 51, nurse and mother. D.O.I: 16-12-06).

For Ghanaian residents, coming from a more outdoor, communally oriented cultural background, a distinct lack of communal fraternity is felt in their London neighbourhoods, worsened by the sense of paranoia which media stories about crime in London created. For many there was a feeling of detachment and insularity about London homes. This is reflected in the following observation which summed up a common feeling among respondents:

I feel that homes here are enclosures. Everyone lives within their enclosed homes to which they return from work. You don't want to jump from where you are into another person's space (enclosure). We are also tied down with laws which are limiting. Back home in Ghana we have open spaces between homes. When I'm out of my house and I meet the person from the other house we greet each other and maybe even have a conversation. Here once the neighbour returns from work and shuts their front door, you are separated from one-another and it doesn't help develop more friendly relations with neighbours, even though once a while you may meet and greet each other with a 'hello' or 'hi'. But it's not like back home where you happen to

¹ A casual survey of the subject families confirmed that in many areas there was little interaction between them and their neighbours.

know everyone in the next house or other houses around. If you run out of salt, you could go to the next person to borrow, and you could borrow other things too. Over here this is not done. You have to have everything you need. It's the nature of the life here and everyone adapts to the prevailing culture. So you withdraw into your own corner because you don't want trouble...

As for the children they like to go out but the environment is not friendly and they spend a lot of time indoors. So when they do go out they want to stay out longer. I don't mind allowing them to go out but I try to make sure they return in good time (Mrs. Odoi, aged 43, nurse and mother of 3).¹

Such reflections were tinged with nostalgia about a lost way of experiencing communal fraternity, although the privacy that living arrangements in London afforded them was also cherished. London-born youngsters did not express the same feelings about the loss of a sense of communalism and they found ways to develop friendships with their peers within or beyond their neighbourhoods. Conversely, young British-born Ghanaians, in interviews, expressed a sense of loss of privacy when they went to Ghana for holidays. They lamented the lack of 'personal space' such as they were accustomed to in London. Significantly it was the children who raised the issue of 'personal space' rather than their parents who had been brought up in Ghana where the concept of 'personal space' was not prioritised. But even back in Ghana things are not what they used to be. The prevailing trend is to build walls around houses, thereby, creating a sense of seclusion and disrupting open engagement with neighbours, particularly in the affluent, plush neighbourhoods. In the densely populated poorer areas the old communal order remained prominent.

It may be argued, therefore, that architectural structures have consequences for the kind of situational micro-cultures (*'place ballets'*) that develop. For Ghanaians in London this means a difference in how neighbourliness is experienced and relations within and outside the nuclear family are conducted. Given the feeling of enclosure or detachment from neighbours which the constructed living spaces produce, interaction within the household gets more intense. But the sense of seclusion is mitigated by the network of kinship and other social ties sustained through telephone contact and the occasional visit.

Similarly, **Ghanaian social occasions** such as ceremonies, parties, and other big events, are usually held in public auditoriums, community centre halls or church

¹ Blackhorse Road Family, Date of interview: 14-1-2007

premises. Eventually these gatherings wound up at the home of the organiser by design or default. There is a tendency for guests returning from the main venue to regroup at the home of the host and cram into the narrow confines of the flat or house, spilling over into corridors, patios, back gardens and every available space, to continue with the activities. This probably derived from customs which designated the home as the focal point of certain ceremonies. In the event of bereavement for instance, it was customary for unscheduled gatherings to take place at the home of the bereaved in the run-up to the funeral, where sympathisers expressed condolences and obtained further information about funeral arrangements and cause of death. The outdoor ceremony for new-born babies also takes place at home and involves gatherings.

The use of home spaces for such gatherings may be viewed as improvised ways of accommodating their cultural traditions within the architectural constraints of the new environment and are examples of the endeavours to fit aspects of Ghanaian (African) culture into the conditions of constructed spaces designed from Western perspectives, notwithstanding the incongruence.

6.4: Adapting family structures to constructed spaces:

Like many African societies, Ghanaians retained time honoured family structures and traditions. Extended family structures with more intimate connotations of family relations were significant in providing a rudimentary form of social security, cohesion and stability¹. Explaining the importance of such relationships in the African context, Nelson Mandela, in his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, expressed what many of the older subjects were familiar with:

¹ **On African family structures:**

In an article on shared maternal values among black women, Aminatta Forna, mentions the fact that **multi-generational households, cooperative child raising, informal adoption**, commitment to wider **kin and non-kin networks**, are all adaptations of family forms found throughout black Africa, where children are raised in the compound by a group of related adults (in Owusu 2000: 361). The sense of communal responsibility enabled the raising up of children in adverse circumstances such as the loss of a parent. But the concept of the white nuclear family remained the standard by which black family structures were adjudged pathological, as in discourses that denigrated such structures. Forna draws attention to arguments by academics such as Niara Sudarkasa that, values underpinning African family life inherited by families of African origin in the diaspora, had been eroded and replaced by the pillars of the modern nuclear family – individualism, isolation and self-sufficiency, which have undermined black families everywhere. And the specific sociological conditions of inner city blacks in Britain and America provided the preferred stereotypes of family breakdowns.

In African culture, the sons and daughters of one's uncle and aunts are considered brothers and sisters, not cousins. We do not make the same distinctions among relations practised by whites. We have no half-brothers or half-sisters. My mother's sister is my mother; my uncle's son is my brother; my brother's child is my son (Mandela, 2000: 10)

He added that he could hardly recall any occasion as a child when he was alone (because of this network of relationships).

This was the kind of significance that the older generation of Ghanaian-Londoners attached to their wider family relations. But travel and relocation physically distanced them from immediate contact with much of their extended family network. Moreover, in Britain residential architectural designs are apparently focussed on the nuclear family with no provision for extended family relations or multi-generational family structures. Notwithstanding the emphasis on the nuclear family, Ghanaian families in London endeavoured to retain links with some members of the extended family network. In at least two of the families¹ featured in this study, an aunt, an uncle or a cousin (of the children), or the occasional visiting relative, lived with the nuclear family in their London apartment, helping to impart a sense of the values of cooperative rearing of children practiced in traditional African societies, albeit a waning practice even in Ghana. Where possible a visiting grandmother baby-sits for a family for a while after the birth of a baby. These were usually not long-term arrangements and in time relatives moved on to live by themselves. For London-born children the presence of visiting relatives sometimes felt like a brief encroachment on their home space, which they got used to. Moreover, regular contact was maintained with relations till opportunities to meet came up. Families sometimes coordinated leisure activities or exchanged visits with relatives.

We have a family gathering about three times a year and we all come together with the extended family members. We sleep over at a family's house. We call each other over the phone during the week (Akosua, aged 17)²

Such examples show how efforts were made to keep in touch or meet with family members. These were ways of maintaining a vestigial form of extended family relations despite the inhibiting structures and changing social trends.³ The old

¹ Tottenham Green and Olive Grove families

² Participant in group interview in Notting Hill Gate, W. London Date: 8-1-2007

³ The theme of family structures is discussed further elsewhere in this chapter

authority that adults once wielded to correct each other's children spontaneously, has diminished but the sense of respect and deference inherent in extended family system remains.

Like other families, the *Tottenham Green Family*¹ maintained regular contact with different family members in Ghana and far-flung places such as America, Holland, Switzerland:

Baba, aged 12:

I speak to my sister in Ghana a lot over the phone everyday and my auntie too, sometimes.

Musa, aged 17:

In my side of the family, even though you might be abroad, it is still evident that there's a close family relationship. You make sure you keep in touch.

Their contact with relatives abroad reveals a transnational aspect of family networks among the subjects. As more and more Ghanaians travelled abroad, Ghanaian communities emerged in various Western countries. The networks stretch far and wide across places such as the US, Canada, and Europe. And within the UK, apart from London, small Ghanaian communities are emerging in places such as Manchester, Leeds and Milton Keynes, to name a few. Children are usually eager to meet their relatives in or from Ghana. But language sometimes becomes a barrier where grandparents cannot speak English and the children are unable to speak the Ghanaian language either. Mother of four from the *Walworth Family*² mentioned how on their visits to Ghana, she usually acted as an interpreter between her children and their grannies.

The picture of family contacts in the diaspora could be over-romanticised. Despite all the efforts made at staying in touch with relatives, it was never the same as in Ghana and this was recognised in this extract from the *Walworth Family*, who though they were in regular contact with many of their relatives, still felt that it fell short of their experience of family when they were growing up in Ghana:

There is less of the contact with the family network here as compared with 'back home' where you could eat with your aunties etc. Here the majority adopt white people's lifestyle and get cut off from their relatives (Mr. Ankrah, father of 4, aged 46. date interviewed: 9-12-2006)

¹ Date of interview: 30-9-2006

² Date: 9-12-2006

Reflecting on the value that the extended family added, he further observed:

Every generation passes on knowledge and wisdom to the next. It's a form of education. In this case the younger generation miss out on the experience, knowledge and wisdom of uncles, aunts, etc. The child not only learns from them but grows up knowing family members better, becoming aware of the family network, and learns to interact with people, respect and love for others etc. Here our children are 'locked up' at home. They move from computer to TV, eat and do school work and sleep. You limit their social and human development (Mr Ankrah)

Implicit in this view is a somewhat romantic recollection of the experience of family back in time. But as explained by other families, a form of wider family connection was maintained in different ways and this mitigated the impact of distance and physical separation. In any case there was a recognition that they were in the midst of change, which made them appreciate their traditions even more. Such observations acknowledged and appreciated the value of traditional family networks. In the diasporic setting such systems were disrupted and their trans-generational benefits lost or diluted. What this left was a closed nuclear family connected instead by domestic communication technologies to the outside world from where various influences sounds, images, and messages could now invade the home with far-reaching implications.

Respondent Mrs Quaye, who first came to England in the 1960s to join her husband, recalled how difficult it was for relatives in Ghana, without telephones, to make a single phone call to someone overseas, and how this took several days to arrange through the local post office on which they relied for electronic communication (including telegrams). Overseas communication was therefore infrequent. Letters and the seasonal Christmas card were the common means of communicating with relatives back home. For illiterate relatives, the letters were translated by their educated children or others. Things began to change with the advent of audio tapes which many used to record messages for relatives before the mobile phone revolution made phones available to most people, and phone calls became cheaper in Ghana and elsewhere. With virtually everyone now carrying a cell phone it is much easier to contact relatives in various places. Videos and photographs were a convenient means of recording events like weddings, christenings and funerals, and sharing them with relatives and friends in a two-way traffic between people in Ghana and their relations

abroad. Some recipients of video recordings of funerals, however, found them difficult to watch but kept them in their collections nonetheless. The facilities provided by computer technology have also enabled technophile, usually male, entrepreneurs to provide services in photography, music (as DJs) and video coverage of events.

While relocation and social change affects the concept of family, technologies are providing ways in which traditional attitudes, instincts, sentiments and needs around family relations are being somewhat sustained and fulfilled. This is a far cry from the experience of previous decades and underlines the impact of communication technologies on the way contemporary diasporas are imagined and experienced. With the circumvention of distance there is an intensification of contact and interaction within and between diaspora and homeland.

6.5: Significance of Objects:

Things have a complex life (Appadurai 1986). Goods are practical tools as well as meaning symbols. The acquisition, display, manipulation, and consumption of material objects constitute a large proportion of expressive culture. It is also suggested that objects change space, feeling, and the sense of embodied self, they resonate with ideas of style, desirable places, and have mythical qualities, and are used to create personal space (Clammer, 1997: 91-2). They may be symbols of status and prestige, and become an extension of the self. Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood also affirm the view that goods and objects are markers, and consumption articulates and displays status or membership of a group

Consumption decisions become the vital source of the culture of the moment ... Consumption is the very arena in which culture is fought over and licked into shape ... Within the available time and space the individual uses consumption to say something about himself, his family, his locality, whether in town or country, on vacation or at home ... Consumption is an active process in which all the social categories are being continually redefined (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979: 57, 68)

Things are therefore acquired for their utilitarian and functional purposes, as well as for aesthetic or emotional enjoyment, and also for status marking purposes. These premises informed the observation of how some material objects were used by the subjects and what underlying messages and significations were embodied in them.

Based on this premise the interior decoration and furnishing of the homes of the subjects were thought to reflect their tastes and the image they wanted to project, all invariably within the parameters of their modest economic means. Their living spaces were an extension of who they were.

An obviously important part of the furniture in all the homes was the television set as one of the domestic conventional necessities, alongside computers, telephones and other gadgets which connected the home with the outside world. The TV set usually occupied a central place in homes, positioned as the focal point of living room seating arrangements and offering a good viewing angle vis-à-vis the seating positions. This, and the multiplicity of TV sets in homes, suggested the prominence of symbolic consumption. The sets ranged from ordinary models to the latest and larger LCD or Plasma flat screen models. A couple of homes had a home-cinema unit set up in their living rooms – a reflection of taste and image, which applied to the cars they drove.

Besides, in some homes, apart from family photographs, pictures of prominent African or Black statesmen were on display. These included Ghana's first president and Pan-Africanist, Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, and other Black icons like Martin Luther King. Such luminaries embodied the political history and struggles for black emancipation. They served as a source of inspiration, but also imbued the private domestic space with the public and the political, and were condensed narratives of Black identity.

Significantly, in many Ghanaian homes interior decoration included works of Ghanaian (African) art and sculpture, wood carvings, traditional symbols, and sorts of African images mounted on walls and mantels. The use of homeland memorabilia was another way to inscribe their new environment with their cultural emblems as a mark of their identity as they endeavoured to create a home away from home.

Faith symbols were also on display. These included carvings or replica paintings of *The Last Supper* (Jesus and his twelve disciples by Leonardo Da Vinci), and other Biblically inspired images such as Mary cuddling the baby Jesus, as well as indigenous Ghanaian religious symbols with inscriptions such as 'Gye Nyame' (meaning except God) which predated the introduction of Christianity in Ghana by

European missionaries. Beyond the expression of faith, they embodied overlapping belief systems, the consequence of contact with Europeans during which European ways of perceiving the world were superimposed on Ghanaian (African) worldviews.

Illustrations:



Figure 5: Living room wall decorations with Ghanaian wood carvings and meaning symbols



Figure 6 - Symbols of identity: (Above): Some of the objects that adorn the walls and mantels of other Ghanaian homes. (Above left): pounding fufu, a favourite starchy food, in a mortar with a pestle. (Middle): More interior decorations with African sculptures. (Far right) Beliefs and origins: sculptured inscription of '*The Lord is my Shepherd*' above a map of Africa made of polished wood with engravings.



Figure 7: Symbols of identity: Wood carvings including (left) curvaceous feminine figure, (middle and far right) a woman with a baby held in place at her back with a cloth & a balanced a head load.



Figure 8: Symbols of identity: (Above left) Hand-held fan & sculpture of a couple in conversation under a tree. (Right): A metallic engraving of Africa on the wall of a living room

Thus they use material things to enhance their living space and to make statements about themselves, their beliefs and aspirations, project a desired image, and generally create an atmosphere that reflects their identity or makes them feel at home. The interior decorations therefore served more than an aesthetic purpose. They were multi-layered statements about their world, identity and culture. The subjects transformed space into place by investing space with meaningful symbols that encapsulated their origins, tastes, faith, aspirations and identity.

6.6: Festivals:

Some Ghanaian ethnic groups have reinstituted their respective annual festivals in London, usually scheduled to coincide with the main event in the homeland. Over time the meaning and significance of the festivals have shifted and in some cases they may have become relics of tribal histories, retaining their significance as anchors for a

sense of cultural identity and heritage. While urbanisation and internal migrations in Ghana have in some cases diluted traditions in their core constituencies, Ghanaians abroad tend to attach greater importance to such traditions, perhaps out of a sense that their cultural heritage is under threat from foreign cultural hegemonies and possible extinction. They are therefore keen to perform them as elaborately as possible, making such occasions expensive events. Sometimes the celebrations involve chiefs and priests or other leading figures coming over from Ghana to participate and to further raise the profile of the event, as is the case of the La Homowo¹ festival in London. These have become important social occasions on the annual calendar marked by the sharing of food, music and dance, after the rites have been performed. Besides, back in Ghana the festivals are mostly outdoor events, but in Britain they are held in indoor spaces such as community centres and hotel lounges, which may be said to be unsuitable for such rites as the pouring of libation or the scattering of food for the ancestors, which therefore serve as an example of adaptation of traditional performances to the structures of a foreign environment that they are trying to make homely. The festivals are therefore a potent symbol that suggests a shift in mentality in the older generation from the usual presumption that their sojourn would be temporary to a realisation and acceptance that this is also home away from home.



Figures 9 (left): Arriving for the Homowo festival event with an attendant bearing the ceremonial umbrella - a symbol of the status of the invited chiefs and queen mothers.

Figures 10 (right) Drummers, singers and dancers liven-up the occasion.

¹ **Homowo** means ‘To Hoot at Hunger’ and is linked to a famine experience in the history of the Ga-Dangbe people which ended with a great harvest, an event which is marked annually. Each of the many sub groups within the GaDangbe ethnic entity celebrates the festival separately from the others, on a different date, in line with tradition. Hence in London there are usually more than three different versions of the same Homowo festival.



Figures 11: Catching up with the 'past': Gathering of dignitaries at the La Homowo festival in Tottenham, North London in 2007 addressed by the district mayor, a fellow diasporan of West Indian origins (in black - centre), adds another dimension to the significance of the occasion as a reunion of cousins in the Black Diaspora.



Figure 12: Pomp and pageantry of traditional authority: Chiefs, sub-chiefs, queen-mothers, & elders in resplendent regalia, assemble for the annual Homowo festival, addressed by the district mayor.



Figure 13: Traditional aesthetics: Doing Ghanaian dances in London. (Left & middle) Women from the *La* tribe perform the *Kpanlogo* dance; (Right) An Ashanti woman performs the intricate movements of *Adowa* dance. Notice the extensive use of trinkets and beads for body decoration.



Figure 14 Beauty expressed in indigenous cultural performances: Young women performing choreographed traditional dances at different Ghanaian events



Figure 15: A bit of Ghanaian flavour in the English countryside: Ghanaians and friends from other nationalities arrive at the lush green *Trent Park* on the outskirts of North London for the annual Ghanaian summer fun-fare & picnic event. Unlike the festivals which originated in Ghana, this annual ‘get-together’ is a purely London event instituted by Ghanaian-Londoners

6.7: 'Ghanaian churches' in London

Ghanaian Christianity goes back to the colonial era when missionaries from various European nations established Christian institutions which became part of the bedrock of the nation and shaped people's lives. Over time Christianity became the dominant form of religious expression among Ghanaians, overtaking traditional systems of belief and practice, with religions like Islam also remaining minorities. Apart from older established churches like Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and Anglican, newer Pentecostal and independent churches have proliferated in Ghana and grown in strength.¹ The spread of the charismatic movement and the Africanised style of worship have invigorated old and new churches alike and Ghanaian Christians travelling abroad tend to look for a similar kind of worship experience. In the UK they gravitate towards churches with a vibrant style of worship², usually joining one of the Ghanaian Pentecostal churches operating in London³, where they feel at home. Sometimes this means commuting across the city to a regular place of worship notwithstanding the distance involved, by-passing nearby churches, in order to fellowship with fellow countrymen, meet friends and acquaintances, and experience the celebratory style of worship⁴ they are accustomed to, and which they prefer to the more contemplative European style⁵. But the chosen place of worship need not

¹ One of the leading urban churches in Ghana, the Central Gospel Church, a mega church with a branch in London, set up a university in Ghana blazing the trail for other religious organisations to follow suit.

² The cultural differences in worship style were summed up by Rev. Aggrey Ogo, chaplain to the Ghanaian community: 'European Christians tend to be very meditative in their worship. They like solemnity... prefer singing from hymn books, organ music etc. We Africans tend to be very vocal and expressive. We like drumming, dancing, clapping of hands, praying aloud and being excited in church ... Immigrants from West Africa were therefore missing something from home... There's the need to integrate the two cultures and for both sides to accept difference.'

³ Other prominent international church organisations with large Ghanaian congregations include Assemblies of God, Apostolic church, and Church of Pentecost. Other independent urban Pentecostal or charismatic churches founded by Ghanaians with branches in London include the Christian Action Faith Ministry and the Central Gospel Church. These reflect the scope of Ghanaian Christian organisations in London.

⁴ In moments of enthusiastic celebration, some exuberant worshippers have been heard to declare that 'God in an African' because the spontaneous and charismatic style, a legacy of New Testament Christianity with its emphasis on the Holy Spirit, suits Africans the most.

⁵ Addressing an inter-denominational Thanksgiving Service organised by Ghanaian churches during the 50th anniversary celebration of Ghana's independence at Westminster Central Hall, Parliament Square, London (18th March, 2007), the Rt. Rev. Elizabeth Caswell, moderator of the United Reformed Church General Assembly, paid tribute to the Ghanaian Christian presence in Britain, and in good humour referred to its vibrancy and significance:

What you have brought to us is something else that we in the British churches would like to celebrate. How quiet it was in our churches before you came to us from Ghana. We taught you how to sing slowly and quietly and keep still, but you got over that (laughter). Into our weak churches you have brought back to us life and vigour and hope ... you have brought the Holy Spirit's vibrance. You have brought music and dancing.

necessarily be ‘Ghanaian’ as long as it meets their spiritual and cultural needs. Mega-churches in London like Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC), Kensington Temple (KT), and Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), with their multinational congregations attract a lot of Ghanaian and Nigerian worshippers to their services. Others join orthodox churches like Methodist and Catholic where the mixed congregation includes whites, other Africans, and Afro-Caribbeans. Some Ghanaian parents join the Church of England in order to gain access to good schools for their children. At least one of the subject families in this study registered with the Church of England for this purpose but actually worshipped more regularly at a Ghanaian Pentecostal church in their neighbourhood.

As the Ghanaian diaspora has spread across Western countries, so has the emergence of ‘Ghanaian churches’ among their communities, many of them offshoots of large urban churches in Ghana. Together with the smaller independent churches, they meet the spiritual and cultural needs of Ghanaians abroad, sometimes attracting worshippers from other nationalities. Parent churches in Ghana often actively engage with their branches in the diaspora, and may periodically send visiting ministers and overseers, recognising the financial potential of their overseas branches, based as they are in advanced western economies such as Britain, Germany, Holland and Canada.¹

‘Ghanaian churches’ have emerged as institutions around which Ghanaian identity is constructed in London. These are churches with predominantly, but not necessarily exclusively Ghanaian congregations. Some of them embraced the fact that their membership was predominantly Ghanaian and operated as such providing Ghanaian language services (usually Twi) aside of their English language services, or using interpreters in the English language services and retaining the Ghanaian character of the church. Such churches combined both traditional and modern style elements in

¹ One of the surprises encountered by church-going Ghanaians on arrival in London is the decline in church attendance among the indigenous white population and the degree to which society has been secularised. This was supposed to be the home of the dedicated missionaries who came over to evangelise African communities. Cynics even suggest that the white man used religion to deceive Africans since they are not so keen on practising the faith that they were keen to propagate. They echo the views of the late **President Jomo Kenyatta** of Kenya who once said that

When the missionaries arrived, the Africans had the land and the missionaries had the Bible. They taught us how to pray with our eyes closed. When we opened them, they had the land and we had the Bible

their services, including the use of traditional folk songs¹, processional line-dancing, and ‘*Kofi-and-Ama*’, a fund-raising style based on competition between groups of people born on each of the days of the week (Monday to Sunday)². Other churches sought to resist the ‘Ghanaian church’ tag, preferring to maintain a multinational outlook in order to appeal to other nationalities. But this was difficult for churches with a core Ghanaian congregation as they tended to attract more of their co-nationals than others.

‘Ghanaian churches’ are also places of social interaction and support networks, resourcing their members in times of difficulty, particularly in the event of bereavement or personal crisis. This description by a subject provides some insight:

Our church is made up mostly of Ghanaians (about 95%) and a few other Africans and Afro-Caribbeans. I would say it is Ghanaian in character, and by that I mean the general atmosphere and the languages spoken. We have a Welfare Committee that caters for members' needs. When someone is bereaved and approaches the Welfare Committee, an announcement is made and contributions raised to help the bereaved person meet the cost of the funeral. Besides, everyone is encouraged to help in any way they can. People take these things seriously because you never know when you would be in a similar situation.

(Mrs. Odoi, aged 43, mother of three, Blackhorse Road Family)³

In the event of *death*⁴ the church assists with funeral arrangements, memorial and thanksgiving services, and donations. Self mobilisation and welfare assistance also occurs among Ghanaian groups in multinational churches where they happen to be in the minority. A case in point was explained by another subject:

Ours is a church made up of people from various nationalities. We’ve got Afro-Caribbeans, Africans, and white British. But we also have a Ghanaian fellowship in the church. Periodically, they allow the Ghanaian fellowship

¹ This includes ‘*ebibinwom*’ which translates into ancient song - a call-and-response chant led by a female lead singer gifted with oratory, who, using song lyrics, narrates a story in praise of God and elicits a rousing follow-up chorus from the rest of the congregation.

² Day-name identity, or naming people after the day of the week on which they were born, is common among Ghanaians. Accordingly, in the competition all those born on each of the days of the week present their contribution as a group - Monday group, Tuesday group and so on. The group with the most contribution comes first. Others are given the opportunity to redeem their group with additional contributions. The competitiveness, the enthusiastic processional singing and dancing, all create an atmosphere conducive to generous giving which subsumes the pain of sacrifice.

See list of day names for both genders under sub-section captioned ‘**Naming**’ elsewhere in this chapter.

³ Date interviewed: 14-1-2007

⁴ Black, red, or brown are the colours worn for funerals. White, the colour associated with births, is occasionally worn for funerals when death is considered a desirable end to prolonged suffering, or where the deceased reached a ripe old age. The deceased are usually laid to rest in the UK. Occasionally they may be flown to Ghana for burial.

within the church to lead the service. The other nationalities also take turns to do the same on different occasions. We are therefore organised as a group within the church and we also run welfare activities, like helping bereaved members, or assisting individuals in times of some difficulty. (Mrs Boateng, aged 48, mother of 3, Enfield Family).¹

It must be pointed out that the system of welfare support is a common practice among various groups of Ghanaians including the non-religious Ghanaian associations.

Furthermore, apart from funerals, the churches are involved in other life-cycle ceremonies such as *marriages* and *births* in the Ghanaian community. Ghanaian ‘white’ weddings are usually church events, but may occasionally be conducted at a local authority registry. It is usually preceded weeks or months earlier, by an elaborate engagement ceremony² which involves a meeting between the two families, the exchange of gifts, and the presentation of a dowry, often including bottled spirits, cash, and pieces of cloth (wax print).

With *birth* ceremonies, traditionally, a new-born baby is kept from public view in the first week. A week after the birth an *outdooring* ceremony is performed and the baby is formally named and introduced to the whole family and friends. Some families still perform this rite in London but with modifications, such as the indoor nature of a ceremony that was meant to be outdoors. Libation may be poured to the spirits of the ancestors, considered to be part of the family/ clan group. As people have become more Christianised, they have abandoned such traditions, or some aspects of them, regarding them as pagan. Some parents opt for a Christianised version of the *outdooring* ceremony, where the pouring of libation is replaced with Christian prayers or dedication conducted by a pastor at the home of the parents or in a church. Others opt for a christening ceremony some weeks or months after the birth of the baby followed by a celebration. Attitudes to such rites are therefore not uniform as people have become distant metaphorically and literally from the centres of traditional practices in the homeland, and feel freer to make choices.

¹ Date interviewed: 8-10-2006

² The engagement used to be a complete traditional marriage ceremony before ‘white’ wedding was adopted and added to it.

Moreover, apart from material assistance and spiritual support, the churches are places where people *socialise*, especially around periodic activities such as barbecues, picnics, trips, and other events. For those without relatives in London, the church environment presents opportunities to meet fellow Ghanaians who, not only share the same faith, but also speak a common language, share similar concerns, hopes and aspirations, or have other commonalities. But even those with families and friends in London still value the homely social environment and interaction in the church. When asked about some of the benefits they derived from the church there were various responses, a few of which are sampled below:

I find the whole church experience and environment very helpful. Church is a place where you can share your problems and get advice, especially if you are in a church where people are approachable and you can talk to someone, like the pastor. That in itself brings relief and eases the tension and burden that you may be bearing. The person's advice could also help you solve your problem. (Angela, aged 44, mother of three, *Olive Grove Family*)¹.

Teenagers were equally positive about their church experience:

In church we have cell groups and in these cell groups we have children of our age with new ones joining once in a month or so. So we get to meet new friends. Sometimes we go ice-skating, or to restaurants like *Nandos* and *Pizza Hut*, and also to the cinema. (Ama, girl aged 15)²

You can make friends better in church. Church gives you messages as to how to lead your life and also how to be an example to your friends at school. When you are tempted to do something wrong and you remember that as a Christian you are not supposed to do that, you don't do it. So it helps you in life (Yaa, girl aged 16)³

The messages are also motivational and encouraging, usually tailored to address life's challenges, to strengthen faith and sustain hope. Issues addressed include marital, financial, and immigration difficulties. But in some quarters there is an emphasis on prosperity usually associated with certain American tele-evangelists and taken up by others. Prosperity preachers have been criticised for their materialistic interpretation of the gospel, but the emphasis on prosperity could be seen as an adaptation of the gospel to the needs and aspirations of the economically disadvantaged, reminiscent of

¹ Date Interviewed: 14-1-2007

² Group interview on 8-1-2007

³ Group interview on 8-1-2007

the development of *liberation theology*¹ in response to political struggles in Latin America in the previous century.

The churches therefore, serve as places where Ghanaians find fellowship and foster relationships, and are an important anchor for celebrations and rites around life-cycle events such as births, weddings, funerals, and anniversaries. For professing Ghanaian Christians, the church is a pivotal institution that plays a vital role in the significant events in their lives, provides a sense of security with its welfare support, and also offers an environment where a bit of the homeland is recreated and experienced and the sense of corporate identity is renewed.

The Ghanaian churches may also be considered as an example of how an institution with a European and Middle-Eastern provenance has undergone a cultural metamorphosis in the Ghanaian (African) environment where it has been adapted to the spiritual needs of practitioners and in the process been transformed. The faith propagated by European missionaries abroad now returns to the secularised European environment in a different cultural garb. Besides, the proliferation of such faith communities on the secularised European landscape may be changing the secular/religious dynamic in society, and presents an example of how subaltern communities are contributing to change in the world that is changing them. For the Ghanaians, the phenomenon of the 'Ghanaian church' as an institution that integrates religious expression and cultural features from different eras and places, may be flagged up as a metaphor for the syncretisation processes in which they are caught up as sojourners.



Figure 16: A memorial service in a Ghanaian church in London: Mourners dressed in black, the usual mourning colour, in procession.

¹ liberation theology - a form of Christian theology developed by South American Roman Catholics (from 1968), that emphasizes social and political liberation as the anticipation of ultimate salvation (See appendix 'c')



Figure 17: Whitish wax prints worn for funerals sometimes indicate that death in this case was a release from suffering for the deceased. Church funerals also tend to be more celebratory than mournful.

6.8: Cultural adaptation & synthesization:

The cultural markers considered here include language, names, foods, clothing & music. Such cultural markers are also narratives of mergers and combinations.

6.8.1: Language – applications and implications

Language functions at the heart of culture, sustains identity and serves as a rallying point. However, language is also a field of unequal exchange of meanings, and functions as an instrument of power with potential for domination. To use a language is to dwell in its ideologies. A collection of articles edited by Alfred Arteaga (1994) examine the hegemonic legacy (particularly linguistic) of colonialism on its subjects. Drawing on Bakhtin's work on language as a means by which one group fashions authority over another, Arteaga notes the impact of linguistic hegemony of English in the U.S. and argues that the coloniser's language and discourse are elevated to the status of arbiter of truth and reality. The dominant discourse has such authority that it becomes adopted by the colonised subject. Subjectification, which began as an externally imposed representation, becomes self-imposed. Hence, Arteaga argues, the marginalised 'other' autocolonises himself/ herself each time the hegemonic discourse is articulated and that this reinforces the presence of the coloniser in the heart of the colonised (1994: 13-16).

These observations resonate with the condition of Ghanaians as erstwhile colonised people. More than half a century after Ghanaians attained independence from the British, vestiges of the colonial master's culture remain entrenched in Ghanaian

culture. English, the colonial language, adopted as the lingua-franca in Ghana, remains prominent in the construction of Ghanaian identities at home and abroad. The historical system of unequal discursive relationship with the colonial master was also transferred to, and accentuated in the diasporic setting where the monolingual authority of the English language¹ underscores the alterity and marginality of alternate languages and their users. Arteaga observes that English carries with it the status of authorisation by hegemony as the language of the greatest military and economic power in the world; that to speak or attempt to speak sparks a display of power from the dominant group (1994: 12). Although his focus was on the U.S. as a global hegemonic power, his argument is applicable to Ghanaians dwelling in the hegemonic world of the English language, the dominant linguistic code, where its use confers advantages in enabling communication with others in a wider world of experience, but also underlines their minority status, as their own languages remain privatised and confined to small units of speakers.

To the younger generation of Ghanaians born and raised in England, English is a first language which they speak naturally and effortlessly, and with recognised London accents to underscore their citizenship credentials. In the case of the older generation, despite having schooled in the English language back in Ghana, it remains a second language which they speak with various degrees of fluency or difficulty. Their accents mark them out as outsiders in the midst of the indigenous speakers. Among the subjects, there was the perception that people were sometimes discriminated against on the basis of their accents, as reflected in this interview extract:

They advertise a vacant position and you apply for the job. As soon as they hear your African accent they tell you that the position is taken
(Mr Ankrah, aged 46, father of 4, *Walworth Family*)²

Another respondent, Mr Boateng of the *Enfield Family*,³ described a strategy he adopted decades before, to get around discrimination based on accents when he went house-hunting. He usually asked his white friend John to represent him and make

¹ In the wake of the 7/7 London bombings of 2005 by British-born Islamic militants with Pakistani origins, which among other things, raised concerns about the direction of multiculturalism and prompted debates about integration, the significance of linguistic authority as a unifier came to the fore with the introduction of English language tests for immigrants, and some Local Councils also considering cancelling translation services where possible.

² Interviewed on 9-12-2006

³ Family visited 8-10-06

arrangements over the telephone on his behalf. At the appointed time, in a reversal of roles, John, as the front man would introduce Mr Boateng over the telephone as a companion whom he had authorised to finalise the agreement. The other party could not refuse him when he finally appeared in person to conclude the deal. This way the voice and accent of his white friend helped him to get around discriminatory practices.

Some made efforts to polish or alter their speech patterns and accents in order to fit in. A case in point was described in conversations with the children from the *Streatham Hill family*¹ who arrived in London already speaking English quite well, but with Ghanaian accents and often felt that they stood out amongst their school mates because of that:

Nat (aged 14)

When I first came to this country because people were laughed at (ridiculed) for the way they speak, I tried to change my accent and the way I speak in order to speak like the people in London so as not to get laughed at.

At which point his 12 year old sister Naadu joined in:

It was the same with our friends. They ridicule you because they are not familiar with your accent.

With unfamiliar accents associated with outsiders and looked down upon by their peers, the pressure to conform in order to fit in and be accepted, in the case of these siblings, resulted in noticeable change in their accents as they made a conscious effort to adopt London accents. Such experiences recall Arteaga's contention that the use of the hegemonic code (English) was a step into a terrain of power; that to speak or attempt to speak sparks a display of power from the dominant group. That power marginalises difference and also prompts conformity from the disadvantaged as the instances cited above indicate.

From a different perspective the use of the English language affords benefits that cannot be glossed over. Linguistically, the Ghanaian community is constituted by microcosms of ethnic dialects, and the English language, therefore, serves as a unifying medium of communication. Ghanaian public gatherings, including church congregations, often involve the participation of people of other nationalities, such as Nigerians, Afro-Caribbeans, and Whites. Given the mix of ethnicities or nationalities,

¹ Date of family visit 6-4-2006

the English language is indispensable as a common medium of communication in such instances and in engagements with neighbours. It facilitates a wider network of relationships and a broader sense of community which cuts across group boundaries.

In the context of British society, English language assisted their citizenship aspirations. Proficiency in English was empowering, and at least in principle, it enabled participation in the political, economic and cultural life of Britain, and provided access to educational and other resources. It was also the means of communication with their British-born children, enabling the young people to participate in Ghanaian events, to which English was integral, and to construct their identities as a second generation of Ghanaian-Londoners, identifiable by their linguistic characteristics, among other things. Moreover, it provided access to the global arena and afforded Ghanaian-Londoners conveniences in international travel across continental Europe, the USA and other parts of the world¹. It also enabled them to access other cultures mediated especially through television, with the aid of subtitles, and in the reception of local and international news² and soap/ film drama. With this far-reaching access, the English language facilitated a sense of global citizenship and a cosmopolitan disposition.

Bilingualism, linguistic hybridisation and code-switching:

Prominent among Ghanaian languages spoken in London are Akan, and Ga³. The Akan language is the most widely spoken second language among Ghanaians, mirroring in the Ghanaian context what the English language is in the global context. But this applied mostly to people who grew up in Ghana. London-born children learned to speak the language of their parents at home, but they sometimes lost the confidence to speak it as they grew older and mainly spoke English, compelling their parents to address them in English, even though they still understood the mother tongue to varying degrees. Others managed to speak their parents' dialects well into adulthood, as was the case with Akweley, of the *Thornton Heath Family*⁴, who found it convenient to switch to her parents' native tongue when she called her father from

¹ Ascertained through conversations

² The implications of this are discussed in the Newswatch chapter

³ In 2004, the two Ghanaian languages (Akan and Ga) were listed among the 150 foreign languages that the 999 emergency services had encountered in London and needed to translate. Source: Evening Standard, 25 June 2004 (by Mark Prigg and Elizabeth Hopkirk)

⁴ Interviewed 18-1-2007

her office and did not want work colleagues to understand her private phone conversation.

Apart from their use in conversation Ghanaian languages were also used at gatherings. But the influence of English was always strong even at meetings where ethnic dialects were used, and as on other occasions at home and elsewhere, speakers regularly infused their dialect with borrowed English words and phrases, a common case of language mixing, done frequently and often unconsciously. Being at least bilingual, this becomes almost natural and regular, and reflects the fusion of the worlds in which they live. In many ways their experiential and conceptual worlds had expanded beyond the scope and vocabulary limits of their native tongue and equivalent words or descriptions unavailable in their native tongue, made translation ineffective. The infusion of English expressions enabled a more effective communication of concepts and nuances of thought. Similarly, as there were no English equivalents of certain ethnic concepts, words, and phrases, a person using the English language may at some point switch to an expression in the native tongue for a fuller expression of meaning.

Hence language mixing enhanced communication but also indicated processes of linguistic hybridisation – improvisations developed into an informal system of expression that drew on the linguistic resources and meaning systems of at least two worlds merged at the point of utterance. This reflected similar processes taking place in other aspects of their experiential and conceptual world – a world that Homi Bhabha describes in terms of a ‘third space’¹, a site of hybridity. Hybridity,² according to its celebrants, like Salman Rushdie, is the way newness enters the world and should be welcomed (Rushdie, quoted in Tomlinson, 2003: 142). Bakhtin also draws attention to the productive potential of hybridization:

The... hybrid is not only double-voiced and double-accented ... but also double-langued; for in it there are only ... two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, as there are [doublings of] socio-linguistic, consciousnesses, two epochs... that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance. ...It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms...such unconscious

¹ Homi K. Bhabha, “The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 207 – 21; Homi K. Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 28 –56

² For a fuller discussion of hybridity see previous chapter on Globalization, Diaspora, Media and Identity

hybrids have been at the same time profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words' (Bakhtin, quoted in Hall and du Gay, 1996: 58).

Whereas bilingualism sometimes characterised verbal communication among Ghanaians, written communication was mainly in English since just a few people could write in Ghanaian languages. Therefore, minutes of meetings, programmes, letters, and all other written communication, were always produced in English. This was an aspect of bilingualism involving frequent code switching and translation. But it also recalls the argument that the marginalised 'other' autocolonises himself/ herself through the voluntary use of the hegemonic code of the erstwhile colonial master (Arteaga, op cit). In this sense the trend could be perceived as a loss of cultural autonomy, authenticity, and integrity to the centripetal pull of hegemonic cultural processes. But this should not be overstated. For the linguistically diverse Ghanaian community, a common signifying system like the English language is a pragmatic communication facility both locally and in the global arena.

Language, as pointed out earlier, is utterance involving thought and experience in the context of a culture. The bilingual or multilingual subject has access to other cultures. Language mixing and linguistic hybridisation therefore indicate a widening of horizons of thought and experience through the fusion of alternate or multiple worlds, and of cultural enrichment rather than impoverishment. It also involves a mastery of inter-cultural translation. To insist on the maintenance of a semblance of purity of the indigenous would be a denial of the reality of their expanded cultural universe where cross-appropriation is the norm. Nevertheless critics like Doreen Massey, a proponent of the concept of 'power geometry' in the world (1994: 149), would point to the preponderance of hegemonic cultures in any mix, suggesting an imbalance in the processes which privilege dominant systems at the expense of the less powerful.

In summary, most Ghanaian-Londoners are either bilingual or multilingual, coming from a multiethnic background in Ghana. Their linguistic practices often involve code-switching and mental exercises in translation, as they switch between different languages in different social contexts. Their linguistic profile could be considered as an index of their location in history and in the contemporary global flux. Each language gives access to a certain cultural group's realm of experience. English

language, for historical and other reasons, has domestic, national, and international importance. Its wider reach facilitates access to a global cultural realm and to a kind of fledgling global citizenship.

However, language is more than a medium of communication; it is also a terrain of power. It differentiates people on the basis of proficiency, style and accents, emphasising the alterity of the non-native speaker. It is a basis of stereotyping - a quick index of a person's background and place in the social hierarchy, and a basis of covert discriminatory attitudes. In the case of the subjects, strategies deployed in response to perceived linguistic disadvantage, and aspirations to the proficiency levels of native English speakers, which some clearly showed, may be understood in terms of a centripetal process of linguistic assimilation. Against this view, the maintenance of their native ethnic dialects, and their own style of speaking English with Ghanaian accents, could also be viewed in terms of resistance to the dominant patterns of speech. The overall outcome of these dialectical processes is linguistic hybridisation, the verbal equivalent of other processes of cultural hybridisation characteristic of subjects in contact zones between cultures which Bhabha refers to as a 'third space'.

6.8.2: *Naming* (structures, adoptions, and significations):

Naming has great cultural significance as an identity marker. For Ghanaians it involves the expression of meanings, as well as individual and collective identity, and is embedded in kinship traditions. The cultural incursion and conditioning that accompanied colonialism predisposed Ghanaians to the colonisers' cultural influences of which the adoption of foreign names is a prime example. During the colonial period successive European nations - the Portuguese, the Danes, the Dutch, and finally the English - established trading posts and built forts and castles along the coast of Ghana (then Gold Coast) in the areas where they conducted business and interacted with the indigenous people. These included James Fort, Ussher Fort, the Danish Christiansburg Castle¹ in the capital, Accra, and further along the coast, Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle, among others. The European presence bequeathed a heritage of European cultural influences and mixed-race offspring. European

¹ Became known as Osu Castle and seat of the government of Ghana

surnames¹ inherited or adopted by the locals indicate contact or liaison with whites from particular European nations. Apart from the surnames, the practice of adopting European first names continued long after Ghana's political independence and underscores the enduring legacy of the colonial period.

In England, Ghanaians with both European surnames as well as first-names, on paper, would appear, or be presumed to be Europeans, just like their Afro-Caribbean counterparts. This, allegedly, sometimes had advantages when the bearers were presumed to be whites and supposedly accorded ready assistance until it was realised that they were Africans with European names and then things became more difficult. But the sisters at the *Tottenham Green Family*, who were born in Ghana and had the surname of a European ancestor from a previous generation, denied that their European names afforded them any benefits, and others affirmed that view.

Again, in London, many Ghanaian parents adopted European first-names for their children as a matter of course in addition to their African names. Considering that Ghanaians already had naming structures and meaningful indigenous names, the subjects were asked why they continued to adopt foreign names, a question that made respondents pause for thought before struggling to explain themselves. This was an indication of how such practices had become subconsciously ingrained that they hardly gave it a second thought. One may attribute this to a post-colonial conditioning. Among the reasons given was that it derived from the tradition of adopting Christian names (christening), a practice bequeathed by the European missionary endeavour. Others suggested that European names were more familiar to people and hence more convenient to use in Europe compared to the difficulty of pronouncing the less familiar African names. On both accounts ingratiation to others influenced changes in a key cultural element in Ghanaian identity – names.

A discussion of this issue in interviews produced some interesting reflections. London-born and bred sisters, Akweley and Ago, from the *Thornton Heath family*, now adults in their late twenties, had indigenous Ghanaian names which were never

¹ European surnames inherited or adopted included Bannerman, DaCosta, Vanderpuye, Van Percy, McCarthy, Maclean, Hanson, Johnson, Dickson, Blankson, Robertson, Thompson, Hammond, Cochrane, Hesse, Reindhorf, and Hayford, among many others

used, for the reason given; they continued to use their English names instead. The subject was also part of the enquiry at the *White Hart Lane Family*¹ home with 14 year old Nicola:

Question: Do you use your African name?

Nicola: I use my African name Amerley only in the house (at home)

Question: Why won't you use it at school or in public?

Nicola:

I don't mind using it in public but I won't use it at school because people might confuse it with my real name which is Nicola. Also people can't pronounce my African name correctly, especially English (white) people.

Interestingly, she considered her English name Nicola as her "real name". As in many other instances, her Ghanaian name had become just an appendage, a cultural relic which nonetheless served some of the traditional functions of names in identifying her with her parents' ethnic group in Ghana and embodying meanings that have come to be forgotten down the years. They therefore retained a vestigial significance even when they were not used. A similar pattern emerged in the *Walworth Family* where husband and wife Mr & Mrs Ankrah reminisced over the name issue:

Husband:

When we had our children we phoned home (Ghana) and my dad informed us about which names to give to the children. So they all have traditional Ghanaian names...

Wife:

But they don't use them at school. They claim that people make fun of such unfamiliar names and it discourages them from using them. Even back home (in Ghana) when I was at school, my middle name was unfamiliar to my fellow Ghanaian school mates, who were from different ethnic backgrounds, and they used to make fun of it. I'll never forget what I went through, and that was in Ghana. So you can imagine what it would be like for our children here. They are aware of the negative reception that their colleagues with African names get. They are called 'African bubu' and other horrible things by their mates. (Date: 9-12-2006)

The practice of liaising with the baby's grandparents or other elders 'back home' for advice on the appropriate name to give to a new-born baby underscored the fact that naming was of significance to the wider family and tribe rather than merely a private nuclear family matter. Among the Akans it was common practice for a child to be named after a grandparent or a respected elder in addition to the child's day-name (see chart in Appendix 'E', page 359) in the belief that the name would confer the endearing character traits and personal qualities of the person named after. The *Walworth Family*, cited above, belonged to the *Ga-Dangbe* ethnic group which had a child-naming structure which determined the name of the baby. A baby's name

¹ Date:7-10-2006

therefore indicated the child's clan, gender, and its position in the family relative to any siblings in order of seniority – whether it was the first, second or eighth male or female, etc. But despite going through the process of indigenous-name selection, the unfamiliarity of such names in England meant that they were shelved in favour of European names. This was therefore another instance where cultural attributes were altered in order to conform to the social environment.

The following group interview¹ of young people, all in formal education, in some instances confirmed this trend, although the responses were mixed, as some of them preferred their Ghanaian names:

Natasha aged 18:

I use my English name because that's what is on my birth certificate. But at home my mum calls me by my Ghanaian name. I don't insist on my friends calling me by my Ghanaian name because they are used to calling me Natasha

Marian age 16:

I don't use my Ghanaian name because no one knows it. My friends can't pronounce it and people have difficulty with it. I keep getting asked to spell it many times.

Efua, (female student, aged 19):

I use my Ghanaian name at uni. But instead of Efua people pronounce it Afa.

Kara, girl aged 17:

I use both my Ghanaian and English names at school, but I tell everyone that I prefer my Ghanaian name.

Ruth, aged 17:

When my friends call me Ruth I don't respond. They have to use my Ghanaian name. So everyone calls me Akosua which is my Ghanaian name.

Some, more decisively, dropped adopted European names altogether in favour of indigenous Ghanaian ones out of political consciousness or cultural awakening and a desire to get in touch with their roots. Respondents like Peprah² (a barrister), changed to typical Ghanaian names by deed poll after informing his parents in Ghana about his intentions and gaining the support of his father, since the family name itself was European and not indigenous. Likewise, father of four Kweku Nti³ had maintained Ghanaian names for his entire family:

When I was in Ghana I used Patrick as my first name. But just a few months after my arrival here it got to a point where I felt the need to portray my culture and use my traditional name instead of the adopted foreign name. So I dropped the name Patrick and stuck with Kweku Nti. And it's also the reason why I gave my children indigenous Ghanaian names.

¹¹ Place and date of interview: Woodgreen, North London, 7-1-2007

² Date of interview: 11-11-2006, Balham South London

³ Interviewed on 28-1-2007 in Denmark Hill, South London

The issue drew some forthright views from another respondent, all the more interesting because she had an English first name:

Question: Why did you adopt an English name?

Auntie Dei:¹

It's brain-washing isn't it? We call it European name or whiteman's name. We held them in high esteem. They came over to make us feel that everything that we do is not good. And they couldn't pronounce our names. So they gave us white names and introduced us to Christianity. If the adopted white name sounded good to you, and was easy to pronounce, you kept it. In the past some people were embarrassed to be known by certain names. Some people even change their surnames to European names to conceal their African identity because of prejudices which can occur with a job application for instance. People change their names in order not to be discriminated against when they apply for things, like a job. Colonial influences privileged white names. But things are changing and even some Afro-Caribbeans are now adopting African names.

The responses cited above demonstrate that Ghanaian naming practices, like their other cultural attributes such as language, were encumbered in hegemonic influences at 'home' (homeland) and abroad. The practice of some Ghanaians adopting foreign names recalls arguments cited previously about the postcolonial subject auto-colonising herself or himself, particularly when the adoptive practices are voluntary, subconscious, and unquestioned. They also bring to mind Franz Fanon's statement that in the eyes of the white man, the black man has no ontological resistance (1986: 110). However as other examples given indicate, resistance manifests in the practices of those who recognise the importance of their Ghanaian heritage and purposefully retain meaningful Ghanaian cultural attributes and practices out of a desire to maintain their cultural identity. For some, this reawakening is paradoxically linked to the experience of leaving the homeland to live abroad, at the heart of the dominant white culture, which, rather than accelerate processes of assimilation, in some instances, triggers an opposite effect as cultural systems are juxtaposed, and the sharp relief results in a greater appreciation of their Ghanaian cultural heritage and the need for its preservation. This was why middle-aged, male respondents like Peprah and Kweku Nti (cited above), and others, considered it necessary to drop their European names for Ghanaian names notwithstanding any potential disadvantages. Name restoration is hence part of a desire to reconnect with a presumed 'primary' cultural essence buried underneath layers of borrowed cultural cloaks, from which they derived a sense of identity. And the general objective of resisting the denudation of

¹ Date of Interview: 26-12-2006, Tooting Broadway, South West London

their cultural heritage included inter-generational transmission of customs and values, a theme which is addressed later in this chapter.

6.8.3: Food cultures & identity

Food, primarily for nutrition, is also a significant marker of culture and ethnicity. The rituals around food consumption, the kind of food that is consumed, how food is prepared and eaten, are all culturally defined. Food consumption is also affected by factors such as the availability of ingredients, financial constraints, health and beauty concerns, religious beliefs, and for young people, parental control over diet. Food sharing or eating together serves family and social bonding purposes and also plays a role in group celebrations. For Ghanaian-Londoners these include tribal festivals such as the Yam Festival and the Homowo festival, marked with a corn meal called *kpekple*. In addition Christmas among most Ghanaians in London has a British flavour with roast turkey, a point of difference from Christmas in Ghana. The variety of dishes that make up the national ensemble of cuisines reflects Ghana's multicultural, synthesised over centuries of different groups dwelling together. Their experience of multiculturalism predated their encounters with other cultures in Britain. As with dance forms, names, languages and other cultural markers, a vast national ensemble of different foods constitutes 'Ghanaian dishes'¹. These include corn-based dishes such as *Kenkey* (usually eaten with fried fish and pepper sauce), *Banku* (preferably with okro stew), *Abodoo*, and *Koko* (porridge); Yam, Plantain and Cassava based dishes such as *Fufu* (with soup) and *Gari* (with beans and fried ripe plantain); various flour based foods such as bread, cakes, and pastries; various rice dishes including *Jollof* and *Waakye* (a mixture of rice and beans with fried, spicy, pepper sauce), different kinds of vegetable stew and soup, meat and fish dishes, and many more. Ingredients for these foods are available in Ghanaian shops across London as are a range of tropical fruits like mangoes. These are supplemented by dishes from European, Caribbean and other places.

¹ Bell and Valentine argue that there is no essential national food; the food we think of as characterising a particular place always tells stories of movement and mixing ... all there is a menu of naturalised foods ... modified, adapted and hybridised over time. Furthermore the foodstuffs we think of as definitionally part of a particular nation's sense of identity often hides complex histories of trade links, cultural exchange, and especially colonialism (Bell and Valentine 1997: 169)



Figure 18: A mixture of Ghanaian and British foods at a Christmas dinner in South London. Elongated rolls of banku, roasted and fried fish, hot red and black pepper & vegetables combined with roast turkey and lamb (towards the background), roast potatoes, salad, rice and stew, Brussels sprouts, soup and more. Such culinary combinations epitomise forms of cultural mixing.



Figure 19: Significance of food in marking events:

(Top left): Sumptuous Ghanaian and other dishes at a Ghanaian Christmas dinner in London.
 (Top right): A sample of foods to mark a Ghanaian occasion in London on the 50th anniversary of Ghana's independence. The selection of foods prepared by the Ghanaian hosts being sampled by people from various cultures including (below left) popular soup dishes and fried plantain;
 (Below right) fried fish with red pepper sauce

Travelling tastes:

The process of relocation had implications for the food consumption practices of the subjects. Information in the public domain about diet and nutrition and the availability of food from other cultures provided a scope for the subjects to experience different dishes, alter their eating habits or times, improvise, experiment with new recipes, or make other changes to their food consumption arrangements. These were syncretic cultural practices which redefined them, given the significance of food to cultural identity. A sense of change over time was provided by older respondents such as Mrs Quaye who reminisced fondly about the good old days in 1960s London:

When we first arrived in the 1960's things were much better than they are now. There were no Ghanaian or African foods but it didn't matter and no one thought about it. If you wanted to eat *banku*¹ you used Semolina mixed with Farina to prepare a substitute for it. Fish was fresh rather than frozen, sometimes still twitching, like we had 'back home'. You could have fresh chicken slaughtered and dressed for you on the spot at Liverpool Street. So food was great. Any thoughts of home were only about relatives whom you were missing.² (Mrs Quaye, grandmother, aged 65)

This affirmed the fact that food cultures are influenced by the social and cultural environment. The culture shock for the post-independence Ghanaian arrivals in Britain was mitigated by other comforts such as food provided. Then as now, when particular Ghanaian food items were unavailable, people improvised³ or experimented with various recipes. Nowadays Ghanaian foods are available in London and are consumed as part of a wide variety of dietary options. The availability of Ghanaian foods now factored in the complex notion of 'home'. Whereas in the past England was considered a temporary place of sojourn away from home, increasingly many of the subjects now feel more at home in London as their homeland tastes and food items have followed them to London.

Food cultures are also transmitted from one generation to another. Cookery methods and skills are likewise passed down to children. Subjects who grew up in Ghana had a

¹ A Ghanaian dish made with corn meal

² Date of Interview: 15-12-2006

³ For instance, Fufu is a popular starchy food prepared by pounding cassava, plantain or yam in a large mortar with a big heavy wooden pestle back in Ghana. In London it could not be prepared in the same manner. People improvised by using Farina powder which was stirred in boiling water and blended to a starchy consistency with a small wooden spoon/ blender. Similar methods were also used to prepare another improvised meal referred to as 'Semo', a meal similar to banku made from Semolina powder instead of corn. Again *Kontomire*, the edible green leaves that grow on cocoyam in Ghana, used for stew, is now available in London, but when in short supply, spinach is used as a substitute.

natural taste for Ghanaian dishes in addition to which they acquired tastes for foods from other cultures such as Caribbean, European, and Asian (Indian & Chinese, mainly from restaurants). Ghanaian children are familiar with their parents' foods and in interviews were quick to list a whole range of Ghanaian foods that they enjoyed quite regularly in addition to foods from other cultures. But as they became more independent, continental dishes became quite prominent on their menu. This was evident at the *Thornton Heath Family*¹ home where the British-born sisters in their late twenties, had grown up on their parents' food preferences but in adulthood leaned more towards continental dishes, sometimes for reasons of convenience:

Ago (aged 25): I eat Ghanaian food that my mum cooks

Akweley, lawyer, aged 28:

I eat more continental dishes. My mum does more Ghanaian food than she does European dishes. So when I'm at my mum's place I would eat more Ghanaian food, but when I'm at my own place, then I eat European foods. On a Sunday, yes, I could do some cooking. But to come back from work and be boiling things for three hours, jollof rice and stuff – I don't have the time.

London-born Kwaaley's menu was a cosmopolitan ensemble:

I usually go for certain Ghanaian dishes, certain West-Indian dishes - foods with flavour. If I'm doing takeaway it would be like Chinese. When I travelled to like Greece, I used to like their food; Spanish and Italian really nice; French is OK; English, sometimes but not usually. And when I go to Ghana the food is always good, even the takeaways (Kwaaley, manager, aged 38)

Obviously parental influence, cultural environment, work schedules and travel were among the factors that determined the food choices and eating habits of the younger generation and for families as a whole. Fast-foods at McDonalds, Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), Nandos, Pizza Hut, Chinese and other restaurants added to the variety of foods consumed by the subjects² and reflected their *cosmopolitan tastes*, acquired in London and through travel. Like other aspects of their culture, their foods tell a story of new experiences, mixing, improvisation, borrowing and recombination.

¹ Date: 18-1-2007

² Birthday celebrations for children in the *Streatham Hill, Black Horse Road* and *Walworth Families* were usually held at a McDonalds or Pizza Hut restaurant, usually pre-booked. They were allocated a secluded section of the restaurant festooned with balloons and they invited their friends who in turn brought their presents, joined in cutting the birthday cake and sang 'happy birthday to you' in chorus, and took pictures. It brought the respective parents of the children together as they chaperoned their children for the occasion and thus formed broader friendship networks which were renewed as the other children in turn celebrated their own birthdays at different times. Such bonds were further strengthened on other social occasions.

Health concerns or medicinal properties of certain foods and new information about diet, usually gathered from media sources and hearsay, made interesting conversation and influenced people's food choices or eating habits. These ranged from information about such things as nut allergies or the health benefits of Sesame seeds, to aphrodisiac properties of watermelons and certain tree barks. Some subjects followed up on such information in the media:

After watching the Kellogg's Cornflakes advert I went to the shop and read what it said on the box and bought one. I was particularly influenced by the suggestion that it would help to reduce your waist size which was what I wanted to achieve. As a science student I agreed with some of the statements on the box and believed in what they said. But sometimes they don't tell the whole truth (Ewurama, female student aged 19 – *Old Kent Road Family*)¹

Concerns with bodyweight, size and healthy eating prompted through the media had an effect in influencing dietary choices or changes. Sometimes the information overload instead of bringing reassurance rather caused anxiety or hypochondria. A respondent provided an instance of the impact new information sometimes had:

A doctor friend of mine mentioned how the saturated fat in palm oil could clog valves in the heart so hard that in some autopsies, the pathologist used a hammer and chisel to chip away at the congealed and hardened fat deposits around the heart. I have not eaten palm oil since.
(Autie Dei, aged 58, Civil Servant)².

Young people also had access to information about healthy eating at school and elsewhere. Fourteen year old Nicola (*White Hart Lane family*)³ provided sources of information available young people like her and their understanding of healthy eating:

I get information about healthy foods at school. There is internet research and there are books to help you and there are also TV adverts and programmes that help you to eat healthily. Healthy eating involves not eating McDonalds all the time and eating things like potatoes or salads to get your balanced diet.

That notwithstanding, many young people still enjoyed fast-foods and had difficulty altering their eating habits.

While there was information in the public domain about diet, health, and lifestyle choices, there was also the enticement to consume all sorts of foods. Dietary habits were therefore influenced by factors such as the media and social environment,

¹ Date interviewed: 26-1-2007

² Date interviewed: 2-10-2007

³ Date interviewed 7-10-2006

predisposition to Ghanaian food culture, introduction to other food cultures, in addition to parental influences, in the case of children.

6.8.4: Fashion and Style

The body may be conceived as a canvass on which cultural identity is inscribed, and also cultural change, resistance and innovation expressed and witnessed. In the presentation of the body the inner self, including beliefs and self-image, and aspects of its social world, are expressed externally in hairstyling, body decoration and adornment with clothes, jewellery, cosmetics and fragrances as meaning conferring symbols.

Hairstyle, it is suggested, is a key ethnic signifier (Mercer, 1987). Generally, among the subjects, males kept their hair short, many older men preferring a regular shave, whereas females grew their hair long¹. Female hairstyles often involved treatments which relaxed and straightened the hair and enabled styling in a variety of ways, including cane-rows, plaits and intricately woven long braids sometimes with hair extensions. Black hair and skin products were rare on mainstream TV, but available elsewhere in niche publications and channels. Teenaged girl Nicola's description of her hair treatments was more or less similar to that of other girls:

With hair products, I use *DAX* which my mum used to buy all the time and so I've been using it since I was little. For styling I relax my hair with like '*Dark and Lovely*', after I do like cane row or single plaits. I have used a hot comb. I have done extensions or single plaits but I have never done weave. The styles are in magazines like '*Black Beauty*' with a lot of black hairstyles. I also see the various styles of people around me which make you want to do the same. Sometimes, I just come up with my own style (Nicola aged 14)²

As she explains, some of the style models are drawn from niche media sources (publications and TV channels) and from other black people observed with the styles. In many instances similar to hers, girls used their mothers' hair products and other cosmetics, adding what they could afford. This way some of their parents' tastes and preferences stayed with them. Some young men occasionally sported cane-rows and plaits with the odd ear-stud, styles that previously were considered feminine. Conservative Ghanaians frowned on cross-dressing, or trans-gender styling, and

¹ Various hairstyles are represented in the many pictures in this chapter

² White Hart Lane Family Date:7-10-2006

males were not supposed to plait or weave their hair like the women did, or wear earrings. The few young male¹ participants in this study, who were seen with cane-row or short weave hairstyle, were a reflection of how young people were influenced by the wider youth fashion trends which distinguished them from their parents. But the relatively small numbers of the young male subjects involved suggested that in some homes conservative attitudes still prevailed.

The world of fashion is also one of intense commercialisation. The global fashion industry exerts a powerful influence on consumer demand for fashion accessories. Cross-media advertising popularised brands and innovations in style, and invited identification with upmarket trends. Brand names dominate the market in perfumes,² clothing styles, footwear and other fashion items. For the young subjects designer labels held a fascination, but for many of them most designer brands were unaffordable. Teenager Dela expressed this fascination with brand names:

We like designer wear and stuff... Chanel, Nike, Armani (that's for boys) ... I've got a Gucci belt, Gucci bag and shoes, Dolce & Gabbana sunglasses, and shoes. With fragrances I like J-Lo and Armani perfumes. I've already got various celebrity perfumes – Britney Spears, Beyonce, Jessica-Parker and Mariah Carey. Their names make the products attractive. Usually I look for it, and if it smells nice, then I'll buy it. They are expensive, but they are kind of worth it. (Dela, girl aged 14)³

Others did not go that far with their interest in designer brands:

I don't really ask my parents for things. I just hope that they get me stuff like accessories, perfumes, the ones that are advertised most on TV. I usually want to get those ones. There's the Beyonce one called *Diamond* and there is a Christina Aguilera one. The Beyonce one is what most people know. It's more popular because the advert is very catchy and 'cause she's a singer and she sings in a powerful voice advertising the perfume, so it makes people want to go and buy it. And I would like to have one as well. Usually the name-brands are expensive, like around £30 in ASDA. The one that I have got now, I got it as a gift and its called '*Ice*' and it came with a hand cream as well. Sometimes when my perfume runs out I go and use my mum's one. She uses brands such as *Rose*, *Cleo*, and *Red Dior* ... As for clothes I just buy

¹ A few of the young male subjects in this study such as 18 year old Mark of the *Walworth family*, and Joe (aged 20) of the *Tottenham Green* household sported cane-row or short weave hairstyle. Paul, aged 18, of the *Olive Grove* family also once sported a small ear-stud, a reflection of how fashionable and acceptable such styles had become.

² An article headed 'Celebrity Perfumes Corner the Market' reported how celebrity-endorsed scents made up 40 per cent of all fine fragrances at the high street chain *Superdrug* and had boosted their share of the perfume market. The list of celebrity perfumes included Jordan (Katie Price) Christina Aguilera, Kylie Minogue, Britney Spears, Kate Moss and Kelly Brook, Naomi Campbell and Cindy Crawford – *Metro Newspaper*, Monday December 17 2007

Other contemporary celebrity endorsed products include L'Oreal promoted by celebrity actresses Penelope Cruz, Liz Hurley; Gillette advertised by Tiger Woods (Golfer), Roger Federer (Tennis star), and Thierry Henry (Footballer)

³ Extract from the Notting Hill Gate group interview recorded on 8-1-2007

what looks nice from the High Street. Most of the shops are kind of the same. I am also interested in designer wear, but it depends on how much it will cost. (Nicola, aged 14)¹

In the case of the *Streatham Hill Family*, for instance, the father had a keen interest in various perfumes and sampled new ones that he came across. The rest of the family got introduced to various brands as a result. Generally, however, brand names and celebrity endorsements did not have the same influence on adults as they had on children:

Auntie Dei (aged 59, Civil Servant):²

I have no interest in designer-labels at all. I go with my own taste and senses. With something like perfume, if I like the smell I go for it.

Kwaaley:

I concentrate more on the product itself rather than the celeb endorsing it. When I was younger if someone like Kate Moss, being a model, if she recommended a certain type of make-up, I would have thought it must be good if that person is endorsing it because she is a model. But now I don't believe in it because I don't believe they use the product at all and they're just advertising it. So I look more at the product if it looks useful. So for example the George Foreman Grill, I would look at the practicalities of that and say that looks good. These days I'm more cynical of these things now because I know they are just using those people to catch your eye. Unless it's someone that I believe is truthful and it's something that I need then maybe I would go for it, but otherwise no (Kwaaley, aged 38, manager)³

The impact of advertising varied from person to person and between generations. That notwithstanding, the media were instrumental in disseminating ideologies of taste and style and popularising trends. Advertising and branding were implicated in the construction of hierarchies of taste and style which young people bought into. Self expression in fashion was within the limits of what was socially acceptable, what was available in the market and within the economic means of the subjects (affordability). The average pocket money received per week by young people, according to informants, was £15 to £20. If they stayed in school they received an LEA grant of about £180 per year. They may also receive gifts from relatives and family friends to boost their finances. Their everyday needs, were of course, catered for by parents. From limited economic means, therefore, they exercised a consumer potential and expressed their identities through tastes and sense of style – style that was subject to external canons of youth fashion moderated by individual preferences and originality.

¹ Date interviewed: 2-10 2006

² Date interviewed: 2-10-2007 (second interview)

³ Date interviewed: 29-12-2007 (second interview)

6.8.5: Clothing

Clothes are culturally defining. They articulate social and symbolic meanings and are markers of youth, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other distinctions. Clothing styles among young Ghanaians followed the prevailing youth dress codes and street styles. Sportswear, hooded tops, jeans and trainers were the regular forms of casual-wear. When asked where they got the cues for their sense of style and choice of clothing from, there was a sense of equivocation. Young people wanted to look fashionable and trendy. Yet they also wanted to be seen to be original and unique in style. At a group interview¹ of young people the common refrain among a number of girls was 'we don't follow fashion'. Challenged by a male participant they insisted that they wore what was generally available but brought their own style to it: 'it is how you wear it', they insisted. This was also the impression given by the siblings in the *Streatham Hill family*² over the issue of clothes:

Nat, boy aged 14:

We wear what we find to be nice. We don't try to be like our friends. We want to be different.

Naadu, girl aged 12:

I want to be myself. Some people are followers. Because this person has this they want to have it as well. They have to have everything that everyone has. I'm different from others and I have no problem.

Adults were even more emphatic about their sense of individuality and originality with regards to fashion and style. This was a typical response when they were drawn on the issue:

I use my own ideas. I don't follow fashion. If something new comes and I like it then I'll incorporate it but I don't buy things because it's like the latest fashion for that season (Auntie Dei, aged 59, Civil Servant)³

Choice of clothing is also context-determined. Ghanaian clothes are usually suitable for a limited period during the warm summer months, although some women wore them all year round at home. But climate was not the only influence on their use. Young people, especially, suggested that they would not feel comfortable wearing Ghanaian clothes on a regular basis. They were for special occasions or for holidays

¹ Group interview at Woodgreen, North London. Date: 7-1-2007

² Date interviewed: 6-4-2006

³ Date interviewed: 2-10-2007 (second interview)

in Ghana. Ten year old Anita from the *Walworth Family*¹, like the rest of the family, had Ghanaian clothes but would not wear them to town because:

Other people look at you if you wear different clothes. But I wear it in Ghana. I wouldn't wear English clothes too if it will make people look at me. I just don't want to attract people's attention.

Her 14 year old brother, Fred, also suggested that he would not wear Ghanaian clothes in London because it 'wouldn't feel right' ... *'It wouldn't feel like how it would feel if I was wearing them in Ghana'*.

Thus seasons (physical environment), social contexts, and general sensitivity to the social environment influenced the subjects' clothing choices. In the context of the prevailing youth styles available to them, they formulated and expressed their own individual sense of taste and style, or so they articulated. Even when they admitted to wearing what was in vogue, like jeans for instance, they insisted that they did not follow fashion. *'It is how you wear it'*, the teenage subjects explained, meaning, within the limits of what was available they exercised originality of taste, individuality of style and personal preference. The older generation was naturally more conservative in their appearance and sense of style. But they also expressed their sense of style in Western as well as African clothes, depending on the occasion. The sensitivity to context is expressed in this experience of a respondent:

I remember a long time ago I worked in a small factory where we all felt at ease. One day I felt like wearing Ghanaian style fabrics to work. When I got to work and my supervisor saw me dressed in African clothes he asked whether a carnival was due. The comment upset me and from then on I vowed never again, and have not repeated it since. But there are people at my work place who wear African clothes now complete with headgear, and even deal with the public (Auntie Dei, Civil Servant)²

This was a case where sensitivity to the social environment influenced style choices. A similar feeling was expressed by children, cited earlier, about African clothes seeming inappropriate in certain situations, but perfect for others. The consideration of context and propriety in the choice of clothing was an index of their acquired social sensibilities by which they navigated the complex world of their multicultural experiences. Such sensibilities, occasioned by the plurality of contemporary society, also meant conforming to unwritten social codes, blending in, in order to feel

¹ Date: 8-10-2006

² Interviewed on 26-12-2006 (first of two interviews)

comfortable in certain contexts, but also being distinctive at other times. Their uniqueness is best observed on ceremonial occasions when Ghanaians appear in distinctive fabrics or cloths such as *Ago* and *Adinkra*, and costumes like *Batakari* and *Kente*¹. Wax prints in general have become a part of distinctive Ghanaian clothing, worn especially, but not exclusively by women. Dutch wax prints in particular have been indigenised by Ghanaians and the ‘Holland’ mark is a symbol of quality. Distinctive ceremonial clothing that used to be the preserve of the older generation, like the wearing of *Kente*, is now increasingly worn by the younger generation², a sign of the trans-generational transmission of cultural emblems.



Figure 20: Ghanaian fashion comes to London. Various Ghanaian fabrics and designs on exhibition at a fashion show in London during Ghana’s 50th independence anniversary celebrations. (Left) A man in *Batakari* poses next to a woman in modern Ghanaian design fabric, as is the man in white cap (middle); and the two women to the right all styled in Ghanaian wear as an identity statement. (Pictures by courtesy of www.justshoot.co.uk)

¹ *Kente* with its historical regal significance is the top Ghanaian ceremonial costume for the special occasion. It is worn by males (wrapped around the body and gathered on one shoulder in a stable heap) and females (in various styles). It is also used as flying tie and as sash over the shoulders). Other ceremonial cloths include the *Adinkrah* and *Ago*. On other occasions such as Ghanaian festivals, they wore traditional Ghanaian fabrics and designs such as batik, *Batakari* and *Agbada*, or chose to wear Western clothes or a combination of both.

Kente is indigenous to Ghana. Its intricate colourful designs are hand-woven in looms as a cloth for the special occasion and often used by dignitaries. It has been adopted in African-America as one of the emblems of their African origins in an era of psychological and cultural reconnection with their African roots, also used for bags, caps, hats etc..

² One such occasion was the 50th anniversary celebration of Ghana’s independence in London. A Ghanaian youth dinner and dance gathering in Stratford in East London organised as part of the commemoration, saw young people in their numbers adhering to the stipulated formal dress code; boys in suit and girls in Ghanaian *kente* dress.



Figure 21: (Left) more fabric designs on display; (right) men in different kinds of cloth with native sandals to match, at a public ceremony. Notice how the cloth is wrapped around the body and a fold is gathered on one shoulder ensuring that the cloth stays in place.



Figure 22: Pride in identity: (Left) *Kente* on display at a Ghanaian fashion parade in London in 2007 (Right) Beaming Ghanaians dress up to meet the President of Ghana near Park Lane in central London



Figure 23: A variety of Ghanaian Kente design patterns.

The Kente design, which comes in a great variety, is now used in various fashion items such as caps, flying ties, bow-ties, bags and sashes. It has become symbolic among Blacks in the Atlantic Diaspora as a colourful emblem embodying a connection with their African origins – an expression pregnant with ‘roots’ ideology. For Ghanaians a sense of pride in the indigenous origins of a colourful emblem that has gained transnational significance.

6.8.6: Intergenerational cultural transmission (exchange):

The continued use of Ghanaian naming systems, the giving of Ghanaian names to new-born babies, the introduction of the younger generation to Ghanaian foods, customs and traditions, among other practices, were all acts of cultural reproduction and transmission away from the homeland. The domestic environment is the space in which much of the transmission of values occurs, and also gender, age, and generation related identities interface and are also negotiated. Apart from values which parents inculcate in their children domestically, there is the transmission of the more performative and expressive aspects of the parental culture in dress, music and dance forms. Female teenage participants in a group interview¹ provided typical examples, summed up in this excerpt:

Natasha aged 18:

My mum helps by introducing me to Ghanaian customs. She helps me with dressing in '*Kaba*' and '*Slit*' – Ghanaian styles of dressing, with beads, trinkets and everything, only for special occasions like Easter, Christmas, Outdoorings and family gatherings. She also teaches us some of the Ghanaian dances like *Borborbor*, *Adowa*, *Kpanlogo*, hand and leg movements, facial expressions etc. We formed a dance group and we perform a mixture of Ghanaian dances, sometimes with contemporary music on Ghanaian occasions. We also do modern dances with Ghanaian music like hip-hop, highlife, and hip-life.

Ghana's multi-ethnic composition means that there is a plethora of cultural forms in every category – foods, dances, dresses, music, festivals, etc, as each ethnic group's culture is part of the great collective ensemble that constitutes 'Ghanaian culture' – a multiethnic mix of cultural practices and performances. *Kaba* and *Slit*, and different headgear styles to match, are among the many dress styles available to Ghanaian women, while men may wear the *Batakari*, or the flowing gown-like *Agbada* with cap, or a big cloth held together by a fold over the shoulder, with native sandals to match (see pictures at pages 182-3). Dance forms such as *Borborbor* (Ewe), *Adowa* (Ashanti), and *Kpanlogo* (Ga), *Kete* and *Gahu* are among the many traditional Ghanaian dances. In instances as cited by the respondent, dress styles for the big occasion, choreographed traditional dances, as well as individual dance forms, were taught to the younger generation (in London). Sometimes cultural performances were taught in formally organised classes for groups of interested young Ghanaians where they learned such things as Ghanaian languages, drumming and dancing, and were

¹ Group interview in Notting Hill Gate conducted on 8-1-2007

introduced to other elements of Ghanaian culture in London. A case in point was cited by respondent Nti¹, cited earlier over his name change to typical Ghanaian names:

My children learned to play traditional drums and how to wear traditional clothing here in London. There are some Ghanaian groups which teach these cultural activities. My children attended these classes at Lewisham with their friends when they were young and learned some of the traditional stuff. But with dancing, I teach them African dance at home ... I don't want them to lose touch with their background, where they come from. I want them always to get involved with Ghanaian custom, traditions, culture, and everything. And they are interested, because anytime there is a Ghanaian cultural activity and I'm invited, I don't have to tell them to come along. They come round to ask 'can we go with you' (Kweku Nti aged 59, ex-teacher)

Question: How well do they understand or speak your mother-tongue?

Nti:

They understand and speak my language (Akan) but unfortunately they are shy about speaking it when their friends are around, which is typical of most Ghanaian children here. They stick to English because they wouldn't want their friends to make fun of them.

And there were instances where the London-born generation took the initiative to organise cultural transmission classes themselves:

Akweley

I'm part of a Ghanaian youth group of under 45's. We founded the one that we are organising. We had a Christmas party a couple of years ago, and after that we started doing different seminars, teaching people about Ghanaian culture. We had a summer event and we try to do social events and that sort of thing. We get members of the older generation, like our parents and our parents' friends, people who are very knowledgeable about the relevant issues, to teach Ghanaian cultural traditions to the youth (Akweley, lawyer, aged 28)²

Question: Why is all that important?

Akweley:

The reason we set up this is that all these practices are here now. All these things that our parents are doing, when they are not here we are not gonna know how to do them. So everyone thinks that it's important to keep going on.

The desire to maintain cultural continuity is evident in such efforts. But occasionally the effort to transmit cultural attributes backfired when home tuition became overzealous, as was the case in this experience:

My dad was anxious for me to learn to speak, read, and write the *Ga* language which is my parents' mother tongue. I was doing well and picking up the language until he put pressure on me and made it compulsory. It became like

¹ Conducted in Denmark Hill, South East London on 28-1-2007

² Respondent from the Thornton Heath family interviewed on 18-1-2007

school at home and I began to resent it. I still understand the language to some extent, but I can't speak it (Kwaale, 38, Manager, born in London).¹

At the *Walworth Family* home the parents spoke to each other in their language but spoke English with the children. They did not participate in Ghanaian community activities such as festivals. Nevertheless home life involved instruction in Ghanaian values. According to the children, they were introduced to basic Ghanaian customs such as the appropriate uses of the right hand and the left hand in social situations. Among the ground rules at home was one that forbade the questioning of parents (as an expression of dissent or a questioning of their judgement, rather than a request for information). Such an injunction derived from their parents' upbringing in Ghana² and contrasted with much of what was seen on TV where children were sometimes seen to strop and argue with parents.

There were other captured moments of inter-generational transmission of customs, values and competences typified by the example of training in Ghanaian etiquette, which emphasised social distinctions between the right hand as the '*Clean Hand*', and the left hand as the '*Dirty Hand*'. On a couple of occasions during visits to the *Olive Grove family* home, six year old Katie's use of her left hand to eat and to handover food to her mother, was promptly corrected. Ghanaian custom designates the right hand for decent personal and respectful social purposes such as handshaking, pointing at things, handling food and eating, and the left hand reserved for sanitary purposes and handling dirty and filthy things. Crossing the two opposite purposes is discouraged. The importance of this is expressed in a Ghanaian proverb which says that '*no one points to his ancestral home with his left hand*' (a gesture that would dishonour that home). This encapsulates the antithetical signification of *left* and *right*. The distinctions become second nature to most people. Virtually every Ghanaian child that the study came across was familiar with this custom as responses show:

I'm very conscious of the hand-rule. It's just the way my mum and dad brought me up when I was little. If I give something to someone with my left hand I always say sorry, even if they are not Ghanaian. If for some reason I give something with my left hand I always apologise. If someone gave something to me with their left hand it doesn't even bother me. I don't think I even pay attention (Yaa, female aged 21, Enfield family).³

¹ Date of interview: 12-12-2006

² For a fuller discussion of views on adult-child relations see chapter on *Soaps and Serials*

³ Date of visit 8-10-06

At the *Streatham Hill Family* home¹, 12 year old Naadu, like others, was instructed in this hand-use rule:

We are taught to use our right hand to eat, to give and receive things from people and to write. At home my mum or dad tells me to use my right hand if I'm using the wrong hand. But at school here (London) they don't observe such hand rules. They use any hand for anything and so do I at school but not at home

This was an example of context-sensitive application of customary practices. While they were conscious of such culture-specific observances, they were also sensitive to others who did not necessarily subscribe to such customs, and some appeared to switch modes between different social contexts – coming to terms with simultaneously dwelling in different worlds of practice and belief. Some parents were keener than others to pass on their cultural heritage to the younger generation. But some level of transmission took place in every home, from instruction in manners to communication in the mother tongue and customs, among others. This may be understood as an example of syncretism or hybridisation, which is more pronounced in the younger generation of Ghanaians.

But it was not all uni-directional (parent to child). It was an exchange, a two-way process, in which children brought the experiences and values of their social world and competences and skills relating to modern technological culture to enrich family life and educate parents. In nearly every home visited, older children were more technophile than their parents. At the *Walworth Family* home, for instance, Mrs Ankrah was assisted by her teenage sons with computer use and internet access by which she obtained news from Ghana when her husband was away on business. At the *Tottenham Hale Family* home the teenage siblings usually figured out how to make things work even without reading the accompanying instruction manuals which their parents found too tedious to digest, and their skills were called upon by parents whenever there were difficulties. Similarly, at the *White Hart Lane residence* 18 year old Danny², the eldest of three siblings said he taught his 44 year old mother to use the computer, access the internet, put wires together and manage other household

¹ Date of visit 6-4-2006

² Date: 7-10-2006



Figure 24: The younger generation taking up the mantle - Trans-generational cultural transmission among Ghanaians in London (in pictures). The younger generation acquire traditional artistic skills such as drumming and dancing and how to dress up in ceremonial costume and Ghanaian fabrics



Figure 25: Taking up the heritage mantle: Young people perform Ghanaian traditional dance routines in London with enthusiasm. Young boy impresses even the other members of his dance troupe with energetic and uninhibited displays. (Right) Girls doing the intricate movements of traditional Ghanaian dances in appropriate dance costume. (Courtesy of justshoot.co.uk)

equipment, a pattern that was replicated in other families where children empowered parents with their technical skills.

However, it was not just about technical skills. This extract from a group interview¹ of teenagers shows other dimensions of the exchange:

...Me and my sister sometimes advice our mum about what clothes to wear. Sometimes she mismatches colours, or chooses wrongly between shoes and trainers. We know a bit more about modern dresses and fashion. But my mum teaches us about Ghanaian culture. She knows more about how to dress formally. So if we're going out for a formal occasion somewhere, she teaches us how to match earrings, clothes and everything (Natasha, aged 18)

This was also a fairly typical pattern of inter-generational exchange that enhanced social awareness and expanded cultural knowledge. Sometimes children brought parents up-to-date with youth values and cultures. At the *Olive Grove* home, for instance, the teenage children were sometimes at variance with their mother's insular, cautionary approach to friendships. But the children altered her perspectives and despite her reservations, she learned to adjust to their socially engaging attitudes. Similarly, Mrs Boateng of the *Enfield family* revealed that her children thought some of her views on youth matters were old-fashioned. Other parents similarly became conscious of the sensitivity of their children to their (parents) sense of style, not wanting to be embarrassed in front of their mates, and so made their views known about what clothing or footwear they did not want their parents to wear. A Ghanaian father visiting the *Blackhorse Road Family* mentioned that his teenage son implored him not to drive his Mercedes Benz car to their school because it would not be seen as 'cool' by his mates. This hinted at a youth (peer) counter-culture that denigrated symbols of ostentation. This was during a conversation in which Mrs Odoi of the *Blackhorse Road family* mentioned that her own children sometimes disapproved of her choices. But her husband's sense of style was given the thumbs-up by friends of her teenage daughter who thought he was a trendy dad. Instances of such differing generational attitudes, tastes and viewpoints were common and the awareness enabled parents to understand, appreciate, and adjust to the social world of the younger generation. They often commented on how fortunate their children were in comparison to their (parents') generation. Just as they enriched their children's cultural lives and outlook with their parental values, so was their own social knowledge expanded by what they learned from their children in the exchange. Social capital in the families was therefore enhanced by the inter-generational sharing of social experiences and knowledge.

¹ Date of interview 8-1-2007, Notting Hill Gate, West London.

6.8.7: *Music cultures:*

Music is a significant dimension of personal and social identity relating, among others to age groups, generations, religions, ethnicities, and nationalities. It is said that music as a form of communication directly affects most individuals' lives and plays a crucial role in constructing, communicating, and ritualizing collectivities, and that it is amongst the most highly structured cultural expressions, reflecting social groups' essential values.

As previously outlined the musical genres that developed in the Black Atlantic Diaspora included jazz, gospel, reggae, soul, rap and hip-hop. The global influence and appeal of rhythms and styles of 'black music' is widely recognised. Its influence on Ghanaians is also significant. Reggae has been incorporated into Ghanaian music forms. Hip-hop has been blended with Ghanaian Highlife music to produce a hybrid genre aptly called Hip-life. But the subjects' musical interests were not confined to 'black music' as other forms of music such as classical and country music had enthusiasts, particularly among the older generation. Whole syntheses of musical forms, indigenous and foreign, now characterise the Ghanaian music scene. In London most Ghanaian occasions are marked with dance tunes from the wide repertoire of music available from Ghanaian and other sources. An intergenerational divide in musical tastes could be discerned. Jazz and highlife music for instance are more popular with the older generation of Ghanaian-Londoners. The younger generation expressed a broad range of tastes in music which included Rhythm and Blues (R & B), Gospel, Garage and Rap/ Hip-hop music, as well as Ghanaian Highlife and Hip-life music, often sharing their parents' interests in Ghanaian music. They were therefore well versed in popular music and familiar with Ghanaian music too.¹ This general pattern is somewhat summed up in the following responses recorded in different interviews:

Ama, (aged 19, student)²

I personally like Ghanaian music. Its something you can dance to. The beat allows you to shake your bum. I also like 'R & B', *Soul*, and some types of *Gospel* music. I don't like hip-hop and some kinds of traditional music as well

Naadu, (aged 12)³

¹ They mentioned internet sites such as Aries, Bearshare and Limewires, among others, as sources from which they often downloaded music. They also had access to Sky TV music channels such as MTV, Smash Hits, Magic, The Vault, Bliss, and Chart Show TV, among others.

² Group interview. Date: 7-1-2007

³ Streatham Hill Family member. Date: 6-4-2006

My dad sometimes buys music, not the *50 Cents* type of rap music which he calls giddy-giddy music. He buys slow music because he doesn't like rap & hip-hop music

'Giddy giddy' is a Ghanaian expression for frenetic, frantic, and rough, as opposed to cool and calm, which was preferred. The older generation of Ghanaian-Londoners did not have much enthusiasm for Rap/ Hip-hop music¹ and often found their lyrics unintelligible. They could not identify with the rap artistes and their gangster image either. They were more used to older forms of Rhythm and Blues (R & B), in addition to the various forms of Ghanaian (and other African) music and dance. Hence the intergenerational difference in musical preferences was particularly pronounced over Rap/ Hip-hop² which is a typical youth genre. Mr Odoi, father of the *Tottenham Hale Family*³, like others of his generation, disliked rap/ hip-hop music, found its lyrics monotonous and described it as 'bala-bala-yo-yo' in imitation of the unintelligible sounds that rappers appeared to make. To them rap was more of street poetry with attitude rather than music. And like others he often wondered about what made rap music appealing to young people.

When I play my kind of music my children tend to like it. My daughter and the other children heard me play the favourite song '*Lean on me. When you're not strong, I'll be your friend ... we all need somebody to lean on*', and they all loved it. So they have a taste for good sensible music too. I just don't understand what makes them listen to rap music. I have often wished that rap would pass away. But that hasn't happened.

But the younger generation were into it and paid attention to rap lyrics and made their own judgements:

The rappers sometimes talk about their lives or about what is going on around, or about love. Some of them swear. The kinds of things that they rap about are different from my own experience of life. I first began to listen to them in Ghana before I came here and then began to listen to them a lot more (Nat, boy, aged 16 – *Streatham Hill family*).⁴

¹ Hip-hop artistes sometimes used sampling to create new pieces. They appropriated existing material, a popular tune or an old hit tune which was then remixed and infused with the hip-hop lyrics.

² Familiar artistes named by young people included *Jay-Zee*, *P. Diddy*, (formerly known as Puff Daddy, real name Sean Combs) *M & M* (a white rapper), *50 Cents*, *Buster Rhymes*, *Tu-Pac Shakur* (deceased). Favourite contemporary artistes (not rappers) named by girls included *Rihanna*, *Beyonce* (& her trio Destiny's Child), *J-Lo* and others. They also named Ghanaian artistes such as *Papa Ye*, *Tic Tac*, & *Daddy Lumba* among their favourites.

³ Date of interview: 27-1-2007

⁴ Date of interview: 6-4-2006

Such a statement draws attention to the widespread influences of popular music and culture in Ghana as much as elsewhere around the world. Danny, aged 18, of the *White Hart Lane family* also liked the Rap/ Hip-hop genre and said that he often obtained the lyrics from the internet in order to understand the messages. Asked what he thought about the messages, his response was measured:

Before (previously), the messages were about violence and killing, but now the media have calmed it down. The message is about lifestyle, going out, the typical dangers that we have to look out for.¹

In the midst of the sometimes unintelligible, often controversial lyrics of *Rap/ Hip-hop*, some young people like him selectively appropriated warnings about some of the dangers of inner-city life that they may not have been aware of, or been exposed to - tips on survival applicable to the streets of London although the rappers' experiences were in urban America. The links and transfers across the Atlantic, and the flow of black popular culture from America, influenced youth cultures and informed young Ghanaians.

Hip-hop superstar, the American Kanye West, in a TV interview² defined hip-hop as a kind of rebellion against social expectations; 'not doing what people expect you to do'. No wonder its messages were controversial. Whenever *50 Cents'* name (real name Curtis Jackson) cropped up in interviews it provoked various opinions. He represented the archetypal gangster-rapper, portraying a hard image, and boasting about surviving several gun attacks on his life, and was controversial for glamorising guns and violence. 'Get Rich or Die Trying' was the caption for a film he released, a theme of materialism and violence that offered a glimpse into the mindset of the archetypal gangsta-rapper. He epitomised a new generation of black artistes who, unlike the previous generation of black artistes, lacked any political or moral focus, espoused messages of materialism, violence and disrespect for women. These now replaced the cultural nationalism expressed through black music of previous decades which were infused with international political messages and addressed racial and economic issues³. This shift comes in the wake of modest gains made through civil rights and social justice campaigns. But such modest advances do not obviate the continuing relevance of a social justice agenda. Rather than addressing the structures of

¹ Date of interview: 7-10-2006

² Channel 4, Date: 5-12 2008

³ See Black Diaspora chapter

disempowerment, what seems to have happened is a diversion from that political and moral focus to an inward-looking, nihilistic expression of black masculinity with a demeaning attitude to women, a hard edge macho image, espousing violence with bad language as its credentials and power. In pop music videos such pop artistes glamorised street lifestyles, showed off skimpily-clad girls and extravagant jewellery (also known as ‘bling’) as the emblems of this generational culture. Such messages delivered through appealing rhythms had the potential to influence impressionable young people. This potential influence was tested in interviews with young people. But the young subjects had a mixed response to artistes like *50 Cents* and their messages. Some liked his music but did not like his swearing, image or message. Others thought they understood ‘where he was coming from’, but did not buy into his message. ‘*He knew he was wrong when he lived that life and he’s telling others about it*’ was the explanation offered by teenager Paul from the *Olive Grove Family*. Others, usually girls, were more forthright in their views:

Ohenewa¹ (girl aged 17):

(On *50 Cents*) He’s a bad influence. The beat (rhythm) is good but not the message. I like a rapper called Papoose, Tupac also because his music is about racism and he calls blacks to unite and Daddy Lumba²

Not surprisingly, young females expressed distaste for the archetypal expression of this macho male culture, which also reflected the subjects’ good grounding in traditional values. They were able to appreciate the musical talents of the artistes while disapproving of the negative messages. It is reassuring that rap music by Tupac that addressed racism and black unity was preferred and appreciated. This showed that the subjects were not blank canvasses easily inscribed with just any ideology, and that some young people were conscious of contemporary political issues affecting black people which could be addressed through the medium of artistic expression. This reflected a critical edge to their cultural consumption. Their appropriation of artistic products was selective and based on prior or acquired moral and cultural capital by which they sifted the mass of material churned out by the culture industries. Their musical interests also reflected a broad range of cultural tastes and influences.

Respondents were also proud to point out which prominent stars had Ghanaian parentage or connections, naming the award-winning British rap star *Dizzy Rascal*

¹ Participant in group interview at Notting Hill Gate. Date: 8-1-2007

² A popular Ghanaian artiste, but with a limited fan base outside the Ghanaian community.

among others. But young subjects appeared to have an ambivalent attitude to aspects of youth culture. They recognised that for some of their peers at school and elsewhere, to be 'cool' was to imitate their pop idols, especially the rap artistes, and to follow the prevailing street styles. The siblings in the *Streatham Hill Family*¹ observed such expressions at school and noticed the influences of gangsta-rap culture among some of their peers and how the idea of what was 'cool' was now defined:

Naadu (girl, aged 12):

Some of our mates think it's 'cool' to 'bop'. 'Bopping' is walking with your trousers pulled low around your bums (buttocks) and walking with an attitude and doing like yeah, yeah, yeah and all that, and they think it's cool to be in gang dresses.

Nat (aged 14):

They speak like they are bad. They try to copy the rappers and the way they talk. They also like '*bling*' (shiny jewellery) and all that.

Naadu:

When you are in a lesson, they think it's cool to chat, chuck names about, mess about and not listen to anyone. They call you 'nick' if they think you are different from other people, like you are brainy (clever) and all that, like you are goody-goody-two-shoes, teacher's pet.

Question:

If your parents would allow you, would you like to wear 'bling'?

Nat: Yes.

Naadu: Yes, because you just want to join the crowd and be like everyone else

In their immediate youth environment the youth cultural attitudes they encountered showed influences from popstars, the imitation of notoriety and rebelliousness with a hard image as the expression of an alternative lifestyle. The response of young subjects to such alternative cultures, promoted via screen and imitated by impressionable youth, was mixed. Generally, it was not for them, but there were aspects that appealed to them. What was obvious in these responses was that the desire to fit in and avoid looking too different operated as an integrating (uniformising) principle among young people. They would like to adopt the current peer group trends often imitated from certain pop icons. But parental influences and oversight were a countervailing factor against such peer-group influences. Swearing, for instance, which they found to be commonplace at school, was forbidden at home. In a group interview², other young people reflected on trends among their peers and linked them to influences from the pop artistes. They noted the imitation, by some youngsters, of expressions of masculinity presented by the gangsta-rappers.

¹ Date of Interview: 6-4-2006

² Group interview recorded on 7-1-2007 (Woodgreen, North London)

Ama (female, aged 19):

Now you hear songs like 'I've got bags of gasoline. I'm gonna kill you'. And you hear people say 'yeah it's a good tune, I'm gonna get them weapons as well. That's cos the media have glamorised it. It's something to do with the music as well cos when it's played back in your head its like 'oh my God that sounds kind of good when you listen over and over again. That's why I think the media play a big part in the lives of the youth today...

... Certain programmes educate you. But films, music videos all that, they don't really help you, they don't really educate you. They just glamorise guns, naked girls, how to get money, how they got eight cars, two mansions that they don't even need. They only need to sleep in one house ...

Abena (girl aged 17):

It encourages boys to, like, move fast in life. So they'll be acting like they are man already when they're just 14. Even 10 year olds are always on the road riding their bikes, talking to girls saying yeah, yeah, yeah and trying to act like they're 18 or 20 years old – trying to grow up too fast.

Jumoke (girl aged 16):

I remember when we used to say 'Are you coming to my house'. Now they say 'Are you coming to my yard'. Boys, they just try to follow the crowd. They just like a gang to hang around with.

Kwartei (boy aged 15):

Boys don't follow people. You call it a gang. We call it a group of friends.

Jumoke: Its peer pressure

Kwartei: Its not peer pressure

Ama:

The low trousers ... What do they wear their trousers to their knees for? I think it's disgusting the way boys follow people. Boys wanna go so far just to get the exclusive trainers that will only be in fashion for a month. What's the point of it? All these attitudes come from TV influences – music videos - people like *50 Cents*, 'I got shot 9 times, I got shot 9 times' and people act like 'look at my stab wound. I got shot there. Look at this'. They copy people.

Kwartei: Not all boys are like that.

Ama:

Yeah not all boys, but some want to make a statement, so they copy these other people. What's the point of having your own fault (making your own mistakes) when you could be guided by other people's faults?

In these reflections the teenaged participants attributed youth cultural trends in part to music videos, suggesting a link between rap messages and imitation lifestyles among some young people. Thus on-screen and in real life they were exposed to lifestyles different from their more conservative upbringing. Notably, the group discussion cited above gets polarised around gender perspectives. From the girls' point of view, boys were very impressionable and vulnerable to the messages and lifestyle presented by the gangsta rappers. Girls were the more critical of Rap/ Hip-hop lyrics which glamorised violence, while boys tended to appreciate the music but expressed a detachment from the messages, regarding them as innocuous narrations of the

rappers' experiences which were different from their experiences as young Ghanaian-Londoners with other moral codes for reference. This demonstrated greater discernment by young people than they were often credited for, though the same could not be said for more impressionable young minds alluded to in the group discussions (above). Boys who took part in the study did not consider themselves as impressionable imitators and were obviously detached from the kind of lifestyle suggested in rap lyrics that espoused violence or used street language. It is fair to suggest that parental values and social relationships were more influential than rap lyrics in moulding the lives of the young people, as other evidence showed, particularly in the domestic transmission of values discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

Religious music:

Other forms of musical expression from various sources have also become a part of the music culture of Ghanaians. European and American Christian traditions in church hymns, canticles and Gospel music, adopted and augmented with more contemporary faith music from various sources, have been absorbed into Ghanaian Christian traditions around life-cycle events such as weddings and funerals.¹ By and large the appropriation of Euro-American traditions in hymnology and poetry² in the reformulation of Ghanaian traditions around life-cycle events provides another case of the incorporation of structures of feeling of European provenance into Ghanaian

¹ Favourite hymns sang at solemn Ghanaian occasions include:

- Amazing grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me (John Newton 1725-1807);
- Rock of Ages, cleft for me let me hide myself in thee;
- Abide with me, fast falls the eventide... When other helpers fail and comforts flee, help of the helpless O abide with me.
- Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom... The night is dark, and I am far from home, Lead thou me on.
- Guide me o thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land
- Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down (usually sang at weddings) (Charles Wesley)

² It includes a great number of poets and hymn writers going back centuries, such as:

- Isaac Watts (1674-1748), an English pastor, preacher, poet, and hymn writer. Considered the founder of English hymnody and children's hymnody.
- American music composers included William James Kirkpatrick (1838-1921) and William Howard Doane (1832-1915) composer of over 2000 tunes, editor of hymn books, businessman and inventor.
- John Newton (1725-1807) was an English hymn writer. For ten years he was involved in the African slave trade before becoming a Church of England minister.
- Charles Wesley (1707-1788) was an English hymn writer, poet, and preacher who wrote over 5,500 hymns including Hark the Herald Angels Sing.

modes of experience and world view - an example of the syncretism that characterises the re-contextualisation of cultural forms.

Besides, the generational differences in the appropriation of musical material may be observed in the contrasts between young peoples' use of popular music and the older generation's use of religious music. The more contemplative faith music served the reflective older generation particularly, though not exclusively, and was a source of inspiration, faith and comfort for many in the midst of life's contingencies and challenges, further defining the divide between the generations. In different ways, therefore, both old and young subjects connected with the wide variety of musical forms and the various worlds and messages they conveyed or represented. The influences were therefore diverse.

6.9: Screen cultures

Uses and Significance of TV among Ghanaian-Londoners:

In this section passing references are made to computers and the internet as technologies of communication but the main focus is on television as an instrument of mediation. The evaluation of the significance of television for Ghanaians in London considers its uses and functions in family units, and its defining role in their sense of national identity (British & Ghanaian). A more in-depth explication of their engagement with television content and its implications is presented in chapters seven, eight, and nine of this thesis, which examine their reception of soaps, African drama, and news respectively.

For the subjects in this study television formed part of the ecology of domestic communication technologies which included radios, computers, telephones, video recorders, and iPods, which also facilitated cultural transmissions. Television was hence used in conjunction, as well as competition with these other media spaces. Young Ghanaians, in typical youth fashion, were more adept with household technologies than their parents. They demonstrated familiarity with cyberspace in general; the internet, social networking sites such as *My Space*, and *Facebook*, webcams, computer games, and the management of alternative virtual lives, among others. The technophile disposition enabled them to engage interactively with the socio-techno culture which allowed users to assume more creative control as they

generated their own material at the expense of prefabricated cultural products such as television offers. While this may have accentuated the distinctions between them and their parents' generation, its overall implications were moderated in the intergenerational exchange that occurred in the domestic sphere.

6.9.1: Family/ Household viewing

The prominence of television in the homes of the subjects reflected its significance as a taken-for-granted part of their everyday lives. For some, TV served ambience purposes providing a background to household activities, conversation, and even the hosting of guests. In many cases it was rarely switched off. TV as social experience was embedded in family life. It provided a focus for family interaction, a prompt for talk, providing an endless flow of topics to talk about. Family relationships and dynamics were expressed in and through the viewing situation. Power struggles over programme selection (though infrequent), and the content of programmes, stimulated discussion, disagreement, and negotiation in the household. Its perceived importance warranted multiple sets in most homes. While it often brought people together in common viewing experiences, the prevalence of individual family members, including children, having their own bedroom TV sets, allowed fragmentation in the family viewing experience. Family members could withdraw into their individual spaces and go on solo viewing excursions to other worlds. That notwithstanding, the living room remained the preferred and main viewing area for family members. Besides, certain programmes and events such as the football World Cup or Olympic Games were enjoyed more as a shared viewing experience.

6.9.2: TV programming and integration into the national viewing culture:

The TV viewing experience is both private and public as millions of other citizens share in the same experience in the privacy of their homes. Regular viewing in the context of a nationally defined broadcasting system becomes a form of participation in the national viewing culture with implications for psychological and cultural integration. Moreover, TV schedules set patterns for family viewing arrangements. In the case of the subjects, 'life on the box' (as with soaps) and domestic activities were arranged around each other and intertwined as modes of experience, as was everyday talk generated around TV programmes and personalities. TV programming provided access to significant events in the national viewing calendar such as the Queen's

speech at Christmas, Remembrance Day commemorations, the FA Cup, Wimbledon Tennis tournament, Royal Ascot, the Grand National, among others. Beyond national events it provided access to global media events - sporting tournaments like the football World Cup and Olympic Games. These facilitated the participation of the subjects in the cultural life of the nation and of the world as a whole.

Similarly, national news programmes addressed their audiences (including Ghanaian viewers) without distinction as citizens. The news itself was geographically contextualised, detailing events and their location in the world with the aid of maps and pictures. The sense of geography was also emphasised with weather maps which outlined the UK and its regions, providing a sense of shared experience of local weather conditions which were often a subject of conversation even between strangers, underscoring their common experience of locality. London news was even more locally focussed and addressed the motley makeup of its city dwelling audiences broadly as 'Londoners'. Viewers were in this way implicitly addressed as fellow citizens without differentiation. This, and the sense of attachment to a shared locality, had the makings of place-identity, which was significant in how the subjects imagined or perceived their identity as Ghanaian-Londoners.

But other issues on the news called this sense of belonging into question. These included news features and discourses on immigration and racism. Van Dijk (1988: 188-9) draws attention to the important role played by news headlines in information processing and possible effects of news about ethnic minorities. Regular news features and debates about immigration often evoked a sense of illegality as in references to 'illegal immigrants' 'illegal workers' and deportations¹. Such terms evoked or perpetuated a psychology of exclusion and disputed citizenship. This played on the minds of many Ghanaians, including, those with legal entitlements to British citizenship, as it reminded them of their 'outsider' status and undermined their

¹ A particularly poignant one was the removal of a terminally ill Ghanaian cancer patient, Ama Sumina, from a UK hospital when her visa expired while she was receiving treatment, and her subsequent deportation to Ghana in 2007/ 2008. News hunters from major channels like the BBC and ITV (ITN) followed up her story and traced her to Ghana where she commented on the good care she was receiving from healthcare personnel, but lamented the non-availability of effective drugs such as she had been receiving in the UK. Her death a few months later was on the major channels much to the embarrassment of the UK government which had often boasted about its humanitarian credentials. Her deportation was seen as a particularly harsh exercise of the state's powers of exclusion and a reminder of the demarcations which rendered some as outsiders.

sense of belonging to the British nation – a source of feelings of ambivalence¹ which sporting competitions revealed. This was in addition to encountered racist attitudes² and the activities of overt racist groups like the British National Party (BNP) which challenged the claims to citizenship of coloured people.

6.9.3: Television and identity-mobilising simultaneous experience:

As hinted above, television's function in enabling groups to articulate a sense of collective identity is often demonstrated in sporting competitions. For Ghanaians this was brought into sharp relief during the 2006 Football World Cup hosted by Germany and televised around the world, featuring the elite football nations of the world. This was particularly significant as it was Ghana's first appearance at this global event and marked their coming of age as a relatively young nation taking its place among the world's elite in a sporting competition. And it was one of the rare occasions when media focus on an African country was not prompted by negative events such as political instability, conflict or deprivation which usually characterised reporting on developing countries³. This was about performance and achievement around which a more positive imagination of national and diasporic Ghanaian identity was made possible and was celebrated before a global viewing public. The mobilisation of their national identity produced feelings of pride and patriotism among Ghanaians⁴ as Ghana progressed in the competition. The feelings were generated and intensified through the dynamic of 'experiencing together' - a simultaneous viewing experience for Ghanaians everywhere made possible by television. The outpouring of patriotic fervour, resulted in an unprecedented sense of national unity across various divides

¹ See notes in appendix titled 'Some Immigration Issues' for a related discussion.

² Despite anti-racism campaigns and government legislation, as the Macpherson Report on the Stephen Lawrence Enquiry found, racism has institutional and vestigial dimensions, and had by no means been eradicated.

³ See discussions and interviews in chapter 9 of this thesis captioned Newswatch.

⁴ The dynamic of broadcasting providing a sense of common identification was thought to have been undermined in the era of digitalisation and multiple channel television, and the resulting audience fragmentation. But television's role in group dynamics was again brought into focus during the 2006 Football World Cup in which Ghana was represented. Like other global sporting events such as the Olympics, it occasioned a worldwide synchronised viewing experience with a galvanising effect on national identities. Competitive international sporting events such as the football World Cup tend to arouse nationalistic sentiments. The passions and emotions evoked translate into patriotic fervour comparable to those aroused by war and thought to spiritually unite a nation (See Guibernau 1996: 8). Some have even argued that sport is a benign reproduction of war and that competitive international sport is now a substitute for warfare, replicating some of its effects. Metaphors of war such as attacking, firing, shooting, and flag-waving are employed in sport (See Billig, 1995:123). Eriksen argues: 'we may perhaps regard international sports as the most important form of metaphoric war between nation-states – containing, perhaps most of the identity-building features of warfare and few of the violent, destructive ones' (1993: 111).

(ethnic, political, religious and other), according to informants.¹ For Ghanaians in London, ‘experiencing together’ facilitated by television enabled them to publicly identify with the homeland and also articulate a sense of identity in informal spaces where unorganised, spontaneous celebrations became a collective declaration of allegiance to a corporate identity which they flagged up in their joyous flag-waving celebrations, to bring visibility to their otherwise less conspicuous presence in Britain. Moreover, for Ghanaian-Londoners, and in particular for their younger generation, it marked a defining moment in their identity project. Respondents, without exception, indicated pride and a strengthening of their sense of Ghanaianess. Considered from the perspective that Roger Rouse advocated, Ghanaian identity at home and abroad is seen in its overarching singularity. Like the Mexicans of Aguililla and their kindred in Redwood City in California, the Ghanaians may be considered as one identifiable group, albeit heterogeneously constituted, scattered over a variety of sites at home in Ghana and abroad in various diasporic locations including London. This transnational identity with its internal interconnecting networks, is sustained by the global technological infrastructure. The strong emotions evoked by the world cup in Ghanaians everywhere reveal their sense of belonging together as a people with a common identity. In other contexts, however, distinctions may be identified.

In the case of the younger generation of British-born subjects in particular, the ambivalences of their dual Ghanaian and British nationality were highlighted. Despite their strong sense of Ghanaian identity the young subjects were also conscious of their attachments to England as their place of birth and supported England to varying degrees. But they also maintained that if ever Ghana competed with England their primary loyalty would be with Ghana. When asked why, the reply from 28 year old Akweley of the *Thornton Heath Family* was revealing:

Because I see myself as being Ghanaian first ... The thing is I was born here (in England) and I have only ever known this life. But you are still aware of the fact that you are in a country where you are still in the minority group ... so you support the homeland first and then England²

Moreover, England’s football matches with other nations produced divided loyalties. Often many Ghanaian-Londoners supported the English team over their opponents,

¹ News from Ghana and respondents who had been in telephone conversations with relatives and friends in Ghana spoke of euphoric celebrations over Ghana’s performances at the World Cup

² See chapter captioned ‘Identity Matrix’ for a discussion of this and other identity-related responses.

but support for England was not shared by everyone and this failed Norman Tebbit's 'Cricket Test'¹. The ambivalence over Englishness and Britishness, also explained in the citation above, may be said to stem from underlying feelings expressed elsewhere in this thesis², that emphasis on difference, particularly racial exteriorisation, often challenged the subjects' claims to full citizenship, unlike the unconditional acceptance they enjoyed among Ghanaians and as blacks among fellow blacks.

6.9.4: Ghanaian diasporic (community) media

Apart from the plethora of media forms available to them on mainstream platforms and niche channels in England, there are also developments in Ghanaian diasporic media. These include satellite digital FM stations on Sky TV which present Ghanaian news, music, and phone-in discussion programmes in Akan and Ga languages, sometimes mixed with English, providing a forum for discussion of various topical issues about events in Ghana and among Ghanaians abroad. FM community radio stations such as Kasapa³ radio operated across London on a limited frequency range, also providing news, music, phone-in programmes on topical issues, with commercials on Ghanaian businesses and services. Various newspapers from the homeland are also available at various Ghanaian spots in London.

The closest medium to a Ghanaian TV station is OBE TV, founded by Ghanaian proprietors with its studios in North Acton in West London, which operates on the Sky satellite network. Apart from Ghanaian programmes, it presents various programmes from across Africa. Its fairly wide range of programmes includes news, usually sourced from the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC)⁴, Ghanaian and other African music, African drama⁵, feature films, sports, documentaries, teleshopping, general information, advertisements and announcements of interest to the Ghanaian community. While many Ghanaians regarded OBE TV as Ghanaian and therefore shared a sense of ownership, the station minimised Ghanaian-specific

¹ The Tory politician in the Thatcher administration, using Cricket as an example, suggested that in international sporting competition, a person's true allegiance was revealed by the nation or country s/he supported, particularly in situations of dual-nationality (Barnier, A. (2001) *Sports Nationalism and Globalisation* Buffalo, NY: SUNY Press (Chapter one – National Identity Globalization and Sports))

² See chapters on Identities and Newswatch respectively

³ Translates into 'good talk'

⁴ Source: Informant and representative of OBE TV (Original Black Entertainment Television) during interview at the OBE TV studios in West London.

⁵ The African drama series featured on this channel are considered in chapter eight.

programming and aimed at a wider audience of Africans, Afro-Caribbean diasporans, as well as interested White and other viewers as dictated by commercial imperatives.¹

The significance of such ethnic media channels like OBE TV is epitomised by a Ghanaian-specific women's magazine programme featured on OBE TV called '*Nmaa Nkomo*' (meaning female conversation), which features discussions of a wide range of topical contemporary issues such as parenting and domestic violence usually led by an informed panel with contributions from an audience. The discussions dealt with social and other issues that Ghanaians grapple with in Britain and they raised viewers' awareness and suggested coping strategies. Besides, viewers were updated on similar issues in the homeland to reflect the dual concerns of their diasporic situation.

Mrs Boateng, a regular viewer recounted:

As soon as the programme starts, I phone around to draw the attention of my female circle of friends because the programme has so much practical usefulness. It raises awareness about pressing issues here as well as back home, informing the Ghanaian community about how they can make a contribution for change and improvement in people's lives. They also provide contact numbers and addresses and coordinate donations in cash and equipment for charity work back home in Ghana.

(Mrs Boateng mother of 3, Enfield Family, date interviewed: 8-10-2006)

This was an instance of Ghanaian-specific programme content with a social and didactic purpose which also gave its Ghanaian viewers a sense of ownership of the medium, not least because often a Ghanaian language was used on the programme and subtitled in English. Phoning around to alert other viewers to the programme suggests a social dimension to the context in which it was viewed. The topical discussions brought viewers up-to-date with current social issues and offered advice on a range of pertinent issues. It was also an instance of the use of television for community building and empowerment purposes. Besides, it demonstrated a diasporic ethos that brought issues in the homeland to the attention of the overseas community, and facilitated charitable responses to need.

¹ High operating costs and low advertising revenue necessitated the dependence on cheaper programmes, programme repetitions, and reaching out to a wider audience.



Figure 2: Ghana at the Football World Cup 2006. Celebrating Ghanaian Identity & Global fraternity

(Left) The Black Stars (the Ghanaian football team) celebrate a goal at the tournament.

(Below) Support across boundaries:
(below left) The German hosts and friends from the town where the Ghana team was based, wearing Ghanaian dresses in solidarity & (below right) other fans waving Ghana flags in support. Solidarity need not be racial, conflictual or nationalistic.



6.10: Summary and conclusion:

Located within multiethnic London neighbourhoods the situational experiences of the Ghanaian families recruited for the study reflected the diversity of cosmopolitan London, described by some as ‘the world in one city’. The neighbourhoods where they lived and the schools where their children were educated were ethnically diverse and brought them into close proximity with people from different national backgrounds. That notwithstanding, interaction with neighbours was minimal as insularity replaced the communalism they knew back in their homeland. But they adapted, and at the fringes, relationships with people of other nationalities developed.

Despite the multiethnic mosaic and the fact that fellow Ghanaians were scattered in the mix, the sense of a Ghanaian community across the city developed and was experienced in participation in the numerous Ghanaian activities, festivities, and organisations that they instituted. The emergence in London of Ghanaian enterprises,

associations, a calendar of Ghanaian events, among other things, signalled the establishment of a thriving community.

But the presence of the diasporic community in London involved incongruities between some of their cultural practices and the general social and built environment. The process of adjusting to the new environment involved adapting their cultural practices to the architectural environment, but also adopting elements of the host cultures which their post-colonial conditioning had predisposed them to, which involved language, names, foods, and clothing, among other things. Inter-generational and cross-cultural transmissions and transpositions were features of this dynamic engagement. The emergent identities in the wake of the syncretic processes bear the hallmarks of hybridisation. In the midst of the multiplicity of groups of people in the metropolis, they have managed to create spaces which they have invested with their presence, emotions, and with their distinctive sounds, tastes, and colourfulness, as a historical narrative of movement, change, innovation, fusion and blending. The picture that emerges in this portrait is therefore, one of a thriving, vibrant, community of Ghanaians in London – a case of the existential grafting of yet another entity onto the cultural tapestry of the erstwhile imperial metropolis.

CHAPTER 7

A DIET OF SERIALS (Soaps & Sitcoms)

Outline of chapter:

Introduction

Ghanaian-Londoners and EastEnders

- Ritual viewing
- Socialisation
- Identification with a national viewing pastime

Critical Reception

- Perspectives from inside & outside the fictional world
- Moral judgements

Representations & Stereotypes

- Window on the host culture
- Relations in the family
- Intergenerational power relations
- Representation of Blacks in EastEnders

American Sitcoms

Summary and Conclusions

7.0: Introduction

Soaps have been described as models of storytelling that use imitations of life to entertain and instruct viewers in the ways of human behaviour, questions of fate, forms of community, strategies for survival, and other life issues (also Geraghty 1991). Developed in particular cultural contexts but appropriated by a diversity of audiences of various cultural backgrounds, they present opportunities for the exploration of cross-cultural consumption and its implications. The genre hence held prospects for an exploration of the cross-cultural consumption experiences of Ghanaian-Londoners.

This chapter therefore examines some of the implications of the appropriation of soap dramas and other serials by the subjects. Given the limits on the scale of the study analysis of all the soaps and sitcoms watched by the subjects was not feasible, hence the need for selection. Inspection of their TV viewing diaries and observation confirmed the popularity of *EastEnders* among Ghanaian viewers, the majority of

whom were regular viewers, or were familiar with the storylines. This therefore warranted a closer look at the implications of its appropriation, especially as the soap had a cross-generational appeal, cross-cultural potential, and was London-based.

*EastEnders*¹ enjoyed nationwide and international popularity. Based in London, it attempted to capture the multiracial flavour of the city in its characters and storylines. Its representation of working class whites, blacks, and Asians, among other aspects, provided much for the subjects to reflect upon. While *EastEnders* remained the focal point of the analysis, brief references are also made to the other popular soaps such as *Coronation Street*, for complementary inferences prompted by respondents. Furthermore, the significance of a few of the many American Sitcoms popular with young Ghanaian-Londoners is also assessed, again brevity being dictated by the remit of the study. These had various relevant dimensions for the study.

7.1: Ghanaian-Londoners and *EastEnders*

7.1.1: *Ritualised viewing*

EastEnders was popular particularly with females and youngsters among Ghanaian audiences. Telecast three times a week with an omnibus edition at weekends, the regular scheduling made it part of viewers' domestic routines, and together with the

¹ **Background:** *EastEnders* is the flagship soap of the BBC operating on a Public Service Broadcasting remit and funded by the licence fee paying public. The BBC was obliged to address its diverse licence fee-paying audiences, including minority communities. Sometimes this was approached with token gestures because of the impossibility of satisfying every sub-cultural group and the pressure to cater to dominant group tastes. *EastEnders* aspired to a reflection of the **multicultural society** but it only managed a multicultural flavour with token representations involving roles for Black and Asian characters which were deemed not realistic enough. Furthermore it was suggested that an element of "tokenism" and stereotyping surrounded many of these minority characters.

Although fiction, *EastEnders* drew on real life experiences to bring to its viewers an engaging series of social dramas. The storylines were developed around the domestic and professional lives of the people in the fictional Albert Square, a Victorian square made up of terraced houses, a pub, a street market and various small businesses in the East End of London. *Family*, *Community*, and *Social issues*, were the main pillars around which the storylines were constructed. The social problems with which it dealt were woven into a sense of value of the family unit, neighbourliness, and an acceptance of the multiracial nature of society. These provided a framework within which viewers could come to terms with contemporary issues and social relationships while deriving pleasure from the alternative fictional world of the serial.

EastEnders sought to deal with the realities of inner-city life by confronting **social issues** such as urban deprivation, crime, racism, sexism, homosexuality, rape, prostitution, unemployment, single-parent families, child abuse, adoption, divorce, and conflict between the generations. It also featured public health issues such as mental illness, AIDS, cot death, among others. Aside from this, soap opera staples of youthful romance, jealousy, domestic rivalry, gossip, deceit, betrayal, community fund-raising events & extra-marital affairs were regularly featured. .

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/EastEnders> - Date accessed: 13-4-2007.

cliff-hanger endings, sometimes habit-forming. Its familiar signature tune was a rallying call that summoned devotees regularly to the ritual viewing of each episode. The cliff-hanger endings suspended the narrative at moments of high drama, leaving crucial enigmas unresolved for the time being. This left a period between episodes for suspense and speculation, whetting viewers' appetite for the next episode. Life on the set became embedded in the everyday lives of the faithful. It was not uncommon for a regular viewer who was back in Ghana to request an update on the threads of the story in phone conversations with a friend or relative in London. Mr Odoi, father of the *Black Horse Road* family recounted how he got addicted to *EastEnders* when he first arrived in London and would rush home from work, like other keen watchers where he lived, anxious not to miss an episode. Eventually he was weaned off the soap by busy work schedules and social commitments. But the rest of his family maintained their interest in the soap.

At the *Streatham Hill Family* home where the whole family watched together in the living room, the viewing of *EastEnders* became a family ritual. They congregated around the set to watch life on the box using subtitles for a better understanding of the dialogues and the cockney and other accents in which the lines were delivered. The scheduling allowed them to watch other soaps like *Emmerdale*, *Coronation Street*, and then *EastEnders* in succession¹, switching between BBC and ITV channels. These were the rare moments of unanimity regarding programme choice when it did not matter who held the remote control. As with other regular viewers, there was a general familiarity with plots and storylines, and viewing was focussed but interspersed with volunteered commentary on scenes and sequences by anyone who felt confident about how to interpret the story. As studies of the reception of *Dallas* in different cultural contexts established (Katz and Liebes, 1990), viewers brought their prior knowledge and cultural experiences to the act of viewing and interpretation of the text and the subjects in this case were no different. With everyone riveted by the drama, the abrupt cliff-hanger ending accompanied by the familiar closing sound of drumming and the signature tune drew spontaneous gasps of "ooh" - a chorus of disapproval at the sudden end to the episode. In other homes, families sometimes watched the drama together or individually, depending on convenience, and the weekend omnibus edition offered a chance to catch up on the story.

¹ Date of visit and observation: 28-10-05 Time: 7pm - 9.30pm

7.1.2: *Socialisation & Enculturation*

In his observations about the communicative ethos of broadcasting, Paddy Scannell (1989) observes that the informal styles of speech previously confined to face-to-face interpersonal communication in ordinary everyday settings have now gained prominence in mediated discourse as private life has been gradually ‘resocialised’ by broadcasting. Television soap operas provide an illustration of a broadcast medium relaying ordinary conversation back into homes for private consumption. This dialogical content, it may be argued, is a socio-linguistic resource for immigrant communities. As King and Wood have also argued the consumption of mainstream television serials by migrant communities is a process of cross-cultural reception as soap operas are premised on processes of linguistic and cultural translation (2001: 24). Viewers picked up on indigenous manners and nuances of self-expression, speech patterns and body language, with subtitles providing further clarity and aiding understanding of the story. Forms of social behaviour as enacted on screen also presented Ghanaian viewers with cues to aspects of the host social environment. The regular viewing was a means of acquiring cross-cultural experience as they observed the exposé of the domestic and social behaviour of members of the host culture close-up on screen. Such regular experiences of participation in a national viewing pastime therefore had enculturation effects and resource potential for socialisation.

The subjects spoke of how *EastEnders* and other soaps provided talking points in their conversations with friends outside of viewing time. The conversation often involved passing moral judgements on characters and speculating on what would happen next. Such socialisation crossed group boundaries given the multi-ethnic make-up of their social environment, as young and older viewers alike met their fellow viewers and friends at work, school, and elsewhere. A typical example was provided by young Naadu of the Streatham Hill Family:

I and my mates talk about *EastEnders* and other dramas like *Hollyoaks* and *Footballers Wives* all the time. They’ll say “did you watch the programme last night” and then they’ll start talking about it - who did what. It helps you to understand the programme better because some parts that you don’t get, they tell you. (Naadu, girl aged 12)¹

¹ Date interviewed: 6-4-2006

In their own circles, therefore, young people engaged in processes of meaning production and exchange. Post-viewing conversation involved processes of textual interpretation of the serials in which varying competences were levelled and meanings worked out in the peer group. This applied to other TV programmes as well. Viewing was therefore a discursive social activity involving individuals and groups, and the discursive practices were not restricted to young viewers. The discursive potential of television and its significance for the mediation of meanings has long been recognised:

¹ Discourse about television is itself a social force. It is a major site of the mediation of television meanings; a site where television meanings fuse with other meanings into a new text to form a major interface with the world of action and belief (Hodge and Tripp, 1986: 143).

Silverstone also amplifies a point previously made by Ricoeur that the spoken and displayed narratives of television have their equivalent and their extension in the lived narratives of daily life, and both gain their meaning through this juxtaposition. He suggests that in shared ritual spaces the culture of everyday life is reinforced:

In such ritualised activities, like watching a favourite soap, one's position in the world is symbolically defined and reinforced in quotidian activities such as talk, gossip and information sharing (Silverstone, 1994: 168-9)

Taking such arguments into account, one may suggest that for viewers the soaps served as a means of socialising within and across group boundaries, sustaining communion with others in small groups of common viewing interest. Appropriation involved processing and sharing social knowledge and experience, and for many, it was a form of orientation to their new socio-cultural environment.

7.1.3: *Symbolic identifications*

Attention has been drawn to the potential of broadcasting to forge a sense of identification with an imagined national community through rituals of shared reception (Anderson, 1983; Cardiff and Scannell, 1987). Participation in the ritual of regular viewing of *EastEnders* and the other popular British serials such as *Coronation*

¹ Discourse in this sense is explained as:

A body of 'social knowledge' which viewers are invited to bring to bear on the text. Commonsense discourses may provide norms or stereotypes of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. However, discourses are not primarily bodies of attitudes or beliefs. They are more accurately seen as means of generating knowledge, as ways of understanding the world. As well as claiming to present 'what is known', they also define 'what it means to know' (Buckingham 1987: 86)

Street connected the subjects to a national viewing pastime¹. Each episode united the faithful in a common viewing experience, evoked roughly similar emotions, raised the same provocative issues for after-viewing conversation and speculation. Viewers may also share extra information about the soap and its cast from other sources, or share the same loathing of the character of 'Dirty Den' or the gossipy character of Dot Cotton. But this did not mean that they necessarily developed identical interpretations of events or the same opinions on issues. Their involvement in the fictional world of the soap interwoven with real life stories emanating from it meant that the subjects bought into a shared national viewing experience and discourses generated from it, as further evidence in this chapter will subsequently affirm. The act of consumption, therefore, identified them with millions of others sharing a similar experience, which on one level was transnational on account of the soap's global audiences, and on another level, integrated them into an aspect of the collective life of the nation.

7.2: Critical Reception

Douglas Kellner (1995) argues that television today assumes functions such as integrating individuals into the social order, celebrating dominant values, offering models of thought, behaviour, and gender for imitation. These are generalisations which may in some instances be applicable, but also be challenged, in this case, by the critical attitude of the subjects in this study in their appropriation of soaps such as *EastEnders*.

Viewers approached the soap from two positions. On one hand they judged the programme and the characters from outside the fictional world, and on the other, from inside the fictional world of the soap. From the 'outside' perspective there were observations and reservations about representations: of teenagers, black people and white culture. From within the fictional world they made moral judgements about the behaviour of characters. There was also critique based on plausibility, realism, and entertainment value. They were aware that the programme was a constructed artefact and factors like ratings or other purposes of the programme makers influenced how

¹ **EastEnders** is one of the UK's highest-rated programmes. *EastEnders* on the mainstream BBC One has achieved some of the highest audiences in British television history. It holds the record for the most watched soap episode in British television history with 30.15 million viewers recorded on Christmas Day 1986. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/EastEnders>, - date accessed: 13-4-07]

Coronation Street is Britain's longest-running television soap opera. The programme is consistently the highest-rated programme on British television. [<http://www.lonypics.co.uk/thestreet.htm>]

storylines were developed. There were periods when some viewers got bored with what they considered implausible and ill thought out storylines. These prompted comments such as:

Now Eastenders storylines are not that good anymore. They have introduced a new character who plays a kind of gangster role which I don't like in the soaps at all. Those are the things that are ruining the soaps. And the way he mistreats the blacks makes me dislike him even though I know the character was written for him to act out and it's not the way he actually is in real life. Those who wrote the lines for him feel that that's what viewers want to see
(Mrs Quaye, aged 65)¹

In addition she remarked:

... Sometimes they just imagine things for their storylines, some rubbish. You see certain things and you question "how, who would do such a thing". It's silly that they should think that anyone would do something like that but it's written into the story...

Another viewer observed:

They have probably covered all the shocking themes like gay and lesbian relationships etc. and now there is nothing to shock people with. The shock factor is gone and for that reason none of the storylines now can live up to what they had before (Kwaale, manager, aged 38)²

Such remarks touched on the elements cited, like implausibility, and diminishing entertainment potential of the storyline. As critical audiences they were not mere impressionable fodder for producers' ideologies. They made up their own minds about what they viewed, assessing the drama and its production on perceived merits and flaws. This was evidence of skills of appropriation that underscored the acquired cultural, social, and media capital that they brought to their viewing experience, taking a cue from Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (1984) - capital in this sense as non-financial assets that involve educational, social, and intellectual knowledge.³

7.2.1: Moral judgements:

Characterisation and conflicts in EastEnders, Coronation Street and other soaps encourage viewers to interpret and judge the characters' behaviour in terms of broader moral and ideological discourses. Assumptions about what is normative surround the

¹ Date of interview: 15-12-2006

² Date of interview: 12-12-2006

³ For Pierre Bourdieu, capital acts as a social relation within a system of exchange, and the term is extended 'to all the goods material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as rare and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formation (cited in Harker, 1990:13) and **cultural capital** acts as a social relation within a system of exchange that includes the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers power and status.

various life issues dramatised, such as marriage, divorce, typical male and female behaviour, and what constitutes acceptable behaviour within relationships. Often the assumptions derive from traditional or conservative attitudes to morality, but in contemporary plural, liberal society, alternative lifestyles such as bi-sexuality, trans-sexuality, couples in 'open' relationships, among others, now demand public recognition and challenge the meaning of normative. Besides, feminism and gay politics have contributed to a questioning of stereotyped gender roles within the family and of the role of the family itself. The interface between traditional mores and alternative lifestyles constitutes a scenario where terms such as 'family life' no longer possess a fixed meaning and are sites of contests and political struggles. *EastEnders* grapples with this changing face of society in which the 'norm' is sometimes disputed.

Viewers perceive things in different ways, and may bring different discourses to bear on the text, which might lead them to reject the 'norm' represented. Besides, varying cultural orientations make for critical judgements. For Ghanaians in London, given their background conservative moral values, some of the themes dealt with in the soap provoke judgements on perceived moral decadence. Common examples from *EastEnders* cited by the subjects included stories involving a father and his son both having an affair with the same woman, a mother who steals her own daughter's boyfriend, or two brothers competing for the affections of the same woman - taboo subjects involving relationships within families. A case in point is provided in these interview extracts from respondents who grew up in Ghana.

Frank:

Eastenders doesn't provide any moral education. Scams and stories like a girl having an affair with both a father and his son - things that society frowns on. In Africa such behaviour is considered taboo. But I do not know how white people regard them and whether they are tolerant of such things. I think the stories generally portray white people's culture. But in the soap the father went to the extent of sponsoring the wedding between his son and the girl. Things like that will not occur in Ghanaian culture. However, it's also possible for such a thing to happen in Ghana but be kept secret. But even if it should happen I don't think it would reach the extent that this story went with the father actively supporting their wedding whilst still having an affair with his son's fiancé. The only justification for introducing such immoral conduct into the public arena in a soap would be that it was intended to show how wrong it was. (Frank, aged 32)¹

¹ Accounts Clerk. Date interviewed: 10-2-2007

Ardee:

Sometimes, probably white people's undoing is their openness about certain things that 'back home' we sweep under the carpet. I'll give you an example, and I know it happens in Ghana. Like relationships where you get two brothers following the same woman or that kind of thing. Or even like a mother and daughter or sister sleeping with the same man. When you follow these programmes like the soaps, they are very open about it. It happens, but here they actually show it whereas in Ghana they wouldn't show it, perhaps because of our way of life. I also think that such incidents occur more among white people. I have no figures to show, but you hear the occasional rumour about such things in Ghana, whereas here you see it all the time in the newspapers and everywhere. I know there are homosexuals in Ghana, but they won't show them on TV together. But here they will show them together. Among Ghanaians incest, for instance, is taboo, yet I know it happens, but you don't hear about it. Some people suggest that by showing them you are actually publicising something bad, with the possibility of inadvertently glamorising, and encouraging more of it. (Ardee, nurse and mother aged 51)¹

The views expressed in these interviews (above) were variously expressed in other responses by adults and reflect common perceptions about the soap(s) and the moral issues it raised. Significantly Ghanaian conservative values provided them with a moral framework by which the soaps' morality was judged. This recalls the point made earlier about viewers bringing their prior cultural experiences to the consumption of soaps and other programmes. The universally held values which forbid intimate liaisons among family members may be infringed secretly in isolated cases. However the soap dramas created the impression of a more common and flagrant violation of such widely held social injunctions among white people, since the characters and stories were locally derived. Even if this was not the case in reality, for the subjects, it seemed to be a symptom of general moral decadence. But they accepted that such taboo violations occurred among Ghanaians too, but were subject to secrecy if they happened, whereas among white people they are brought out into the open. Whether keeping it secret or bringing it out into the open was better for society, and particularly, set the right or wrong example for children, was an unresolved issue.

In the first interview extract (above) for instance, Frank shows ambivalence in that he appears to stop short of suggesting that the soap reflected the general moral stance of White society on such matters, but is persuaded that the stories reflect White culture:

¹ Date interviewed: 16-12-2006

“I do not know how white people regard them and whether they are tolerant of such things. I think the stories generally portray white people’s culture”. But he concedes that such disreputable behaviour in the family might also happen among Ghanaians and be covered up because of the shame involved. This ambiguity and speculative evaluation reflected the difficulty in making general moral attributions to groups on the basis of insufficient information or to simplistically view the world from a bifurcated perspective typical of characterisations of otherness.¹

Nevertheless media representations of life provided the types with which others’ lives could be imagined where knowledge of the other is unavailable. This is evident in the second extract (above) where Ardee states: *“I also think that such incidents occur more among white people. I have no figures to show, but you hear the occasional rumour about such things in Ghana, whereas here you see it all the time in the newspapers and everywhere”*. There is a dependence on media representations to make the “here” and “there” comparisons between Black African and White European cultures. Media representations are therefore a significant source of information (which may be essentially stereotypical or fictive) by which knowledge about others is gathered or constructed, their otherness imagined, and opinions formed. This conclusion is reinforced by the currency and consistency in the views expressed by respondents based mostly on screen representations, but also on commonsense observation, the preponderance of which suggested that comparatively, white society was more permissive and more open on certain moral issues. Against this perception they affirmed their traditional values. When Ardee was drawn on whether she thought there were positive aspects of the drama that Ghanaians could adopt, it provoked a high pitched, spontaneously exclaimed response - a categorical *“No! I don’t think so! No way! Things that we see as taboo, there is no way we should imitate or adopt”*.

¹ It could be suggested that exposure of the subjects to the openness and liberal attitudes of white society, and to alternative lifestyles and moral choices, had the cumulative effect of tempering the moral judgements of the subjects and raising their tolerance levels to such alternative lifestyles, as the shock factor diminished with the frequency of exposure. This distinguished them from some of the more conservative Ghanaians in the homeland who retained a dimmer view of deviations from traditional values and lifestyles and in conversations, expressed unease about such influences spreading to Ghana. The contrast in attitudes was also evident with newly arrived visitors from Ghana who would listen to some of the stories in the media or from their London-based relatives with amazement. One such story was about a concerned parent who was arrested for confronting campaigning gay activists who were handing out leaflets to children at the gates of the school which her child attended. It may be surmised that living abroad and coming to terms with cultural differences had a tempering effect on the world view of some Ghanaians even if it did not fundamentally change their moral outlook

This mood summed up the attitude of the subjects towards the morally objectionable aspects of the drama, even though the question was not about breaking taboos. Like other Ghanaians of the older generation, their perception of the world seemed bifurcated. On moral issues their views were quite conservative, which contrasted with the perception that in Britain (the West) attitudes to morality were more liberal, or that the society tolerated moral permissiveness. This may be simplistic, but served as the backdrop from which comparative evaluations were made between their 'home' culture (Ghanaian/ African)¹, and British (White/ Western) culture, both in everyday life and in their media consumption. Respondent Ardee, (cited above), for instance, frequently makes references to "here" (Britain) and "there" (Ghana). This was not necessarily the case with the younger respondents who were born and raised in Britain and who did not often make such 'back home' references. Their experience of Ghana was limited to brief holidays and therefore their reference points were usually derived from Britain mixed with parental influences at home (domestic sphere). This is borne out in the responses from London-born and bred respondents, which are referred to later. One of these (from Kwaale), approaches the soaps as media productions intended to capture audiences more than anything else. But later when she addresses issues around parent/ child relationships, she brings her upbringing on her parents' values into play to make a distinction between White children and people like her who were raised on Ghanaian values.

While Ghanaian viewers, with a different cultural background, tended to read such texts as a depiction of White British society², or an aspect of it, since much of their information about the host society was obtained through the media, the same text may be read differently by sections of the host White society who may have reservations about moral issues portrayed on screen. The campaigns of the likes of Mary Whitehouse³ and others, and the public pronouncements of church leaders and some

¹ 'Ghanaian' 'African' and 'Black' are often used interchangeably by the subjects to represent their world and to make distinctions between that and the White western world.

² The programme makers suggested that the drama was meant to be as realistic as possible. They emphasised that it was to be about 'everyday life' in the inner city 'today' & regarded it as a 'slice of life'. Creator/producer Julia Smith declared that "We don't make life, we reflect it" (www.bbc.com/Eastenders date accessed April 2007). Viewers may therefore be forgiven for accepting it as a reflection of life, and in this case as a depiction of White society.

³ Mary Whitehouse, a leading campaigner on moral issues, argued at the time that *EastEnders* represented a violation of "family viewing time". She regarded *EastEnders* as a fundamental assault on the family and morality itself. She made reference to representation of family life and emphasis on

politicians,¹ who could be said to represent conservative British moral values, are a case in point. For them modern society was perceived to be sliding away from the 'good old' moral standards into a condition of decline. This perception of decline also applied to established institutions like the Church and their influences on society, in a general climate of liberalism and secularism. That challenges the bifurcated moral perspective on the world as used in the critiques by the Ghanaian respondents, and suggests that traditional moral values are commonly held and have advocates in British society. But such values may be conceding ground to alternative morality or moral relativism. The recognition that such processes are not confined to the Western world and that back in their homeland also things were changing, although at a slower pace, concerned many conservatively minded Ghanaians, worried that foreign influences were undermining their traditional values.

The younger generation of Ghanaians, born and raised in London, sometimes read the texts differently. Their perspective is represented in the views of London born Kwaale, one of those who read them mainly as fictional constructions intended to provoke audience interest and boost viewing ratings.

I think what you are finding now with a lot of these soaps is that when you've explored everything, there's nothing left. For example about ten years ago something like a gay relationship would have been shocking on television. They've done that now and so what do you do? Even in *Brookside* (which is gone now), they had a good storyline where a mother and daughter were being mistreated by the father and they killed him and put him under the patio. That was so dramatic. After you've done that what have you got left? I think that's the problem that all of them (the soaps) are having now, because there's nothing left to shock people with. What they are trying to do now is to bring in things that have happened in reality. But for some reason the shock factor is gone. None of the storylines live up to what they had before.
(Kwaale, manager, aged 38)²

Here the focus shifts from a moral critique to an appreciation of the context of the production of soaps as television drama serials vying for audience share and deploying shock tactics to do so. Implicit in this statement is the fact that the shock

psychological and emotional violence within the show. She was also critical of language such as "bleeding", "bloody hell", "bastard" and "for Christ's sake". However, Whitehouse also praised the programme, describing Michelle Fowler's decision not to have an abortion as a "very positive storyline" (www.bbc.com/Eastenders) date accessed April 2007.

¹ A case in point is the call for a return to traditional moral values in the 'back to basics' campaign of Prime minister John Major launched at the Tory party conference in 1993, interpreted as a moral crusade which was later ridiculed, as several stories of sleaze about Tory politicians came to light.

² Date interviewed: 12-12-2006

tactics were initially successful only because the mass audiences were still largely conditioned by conservative moral values, or shared perspectives derived from such values, and the shock factor lost its impact only because the novelty factor had worn off. The complex picture that emerges is therefore commensurate with the different perspectives from which the soaps were read.

By and large, therefore, while some viewed provocative soap themes from the perspective of fictional constructions intended to provoke viewing interest but not always doing so successfully, others read them as a shifting of the moral compass of a more permissive host society. The latter perception was sometimes affirmed by tabloid news stories of the kind that suggested that such incidents were not uncommon and that in some cases reality proved stranger than fiction. Against the perception of moral permissiveness, the subjects affirmed their traditional moral values and were often frustrated that traditional morality was not being upheld in society, and no good examples were being set for children especially onscreen. But it may be suggested that frequent exposure to alternative lifestyles and the prevailing sense of moral relativity tended to make conservative Ghanaian viewers a bit more tolerant about instances of alternative lifestyles and moral choices.

7.3: Representations:

EastEnders, as drama, was about representations - of relationships, children, teenagers, black people, and white culture, among other things. Some of such representations are subsequently explored.

7.3.1: Window on features/ aspects of the host culture:

Generally, the drama was considered as portraiture of white working-class society with a bit of multicultural flavour. The programme makers regarded *EastEnders* as a 'slice of life' and so aimed to make it a realistic reflection of 'everyday life' in the contemporary inner city¹. To many Ghanaian viewers, soaps like *EastEnders* approximated to white working-class culture. The pub as the hub of social life of the local community, the market scene, the conduct of relationships, mundane activities,

¹ Creator/producer Julia Smith is said to have declared: "We don't make life, we reflect it" ... "We decided to go for a realistic, fairly outspoken type of drama which could encompass stories about homosexuality, rape, unemployment, racial prejudice, etc., in a believable context. Above all, we wanted realism" <http://www.bbc.com/EastEnders> - date accessed: 13-4-2007

all lubricated with well constructed dialogues in London English accents, depicted the host 'white' culture. It is worth recalling Mrs Quaye's view that:

Much of it (*EastEnders*) is about white culture. Their culture is what they know, though sometimes they try to mix in other cultures. But sometimes they just imagine things for their storylines, some rubbish. You see certain things on TV and you question "how, who would do such a thing". It's silly that they should think that anyone would do something like that but it's written into the story nonetheless. Having said that, there may be people who could actually do such outrageous things (Mrs Quaye, aged 65)¹

This implies that the soap poorly represented the other cultures that it tried to include, but the depiction of 'their own' culture was more accurate because that was what they knew best. The soap was therefore seen as providing cues about some features of British culture which the subjects picked up on. Pub life may not be their forte as they (the subjects) socialised in their own circles, but there were points of commonality which viewers could identify with, which sustained their interest. This brings to mind David Buckingham's suggestion that 'the concentration on minutiae of everyday life, which is typical of British serials, means that they may enable viewers to relate the characters' experiences to events in their own everyday lives to a much greater degree than is possible in other genres of TV drama' (Buckingham, 1987: 83)

The conduct of on-screen relationships prompted reflections on difference. In a conversation at the *White Hart Lane* family home², mother of three Angela made reference to the portrayal in *EastEnders* of "typical white relationships". Her views were shared by many others.

Question:

What did you mean by typical white relationships as depicted in the soap?

Angela:

There seems to be no deep commitment involved in their (white) relationships. A male love rival could tell the husband of the woman he's after "Your wife and I are in love so we are getting married, she doesn't love you anymore". Such a serious and dangerous thing to say, which could result in someone getting killed, could be said with ease to a married person. So their relationships are a bit different from ours (black Africans). Black women for instance can be difficult. They like to play hard-to-get and may inflate their sense of self-importance. A white woman, if she fancies a man, could go up to him and tell him straight that she fancies him. With black people it takes so much for someone to profess their affection for another person, if at all. It may happen but it doesn't happen too often. But the white person makes it clear

¹ Date interviewed: 15-12-2006

² Date: 28-7-2006

that they like you or fancy you and if you still make no effort to respond, they may even seize the initiative and make the approach themselves and perhaps invite you. But I don't see any deep meaning or commitment in white people's relationships, just lots of hugging and kissing. For instance, on a wedding day, a spouse may go out for a secret, illicit fling with someone else by the side, before attending the wedding ceremony to be married to his or her partner - things like that, which makes their relationships seem fluffy and less meaningful. Black people are deeper with their relationships and try harder to sustain them. We don't do too much of "Oh I love you, I love you". When the love is finished, tolerance, companionship and other things come into it which white people don't seem to have the time or patience for. They need to be in love all the time. (Angela, aged 45, mother, *White Hart Lane Family*)

Cynthia, mother of three shared similar views:

In *EastEnders* a mother could steal her own daughter's boyfriend. Society frowns on such behaviour so you keep it quiet. But they hide nothing. They can take off their clothes without any qualms. They (whites) are more open in relationships whereas black people tend to hide their feelings and keep things to themselves. Whites voice their feelings more easily. If a white person has feelings for someone they tell the person. Black people will go round in circles: "you resemble my aunt who lives in such and such a place" etc, before the words come out. (Cynthia aged 38, *Streatham Hill family*)

As indicated above, soaps often provided scenarios for establishing points of cultural comparison. Mrs Quaye in a conversation reflected on the similarities and differences in the way funerals were performed:

In *Coronation Street* the factory owner died and they had a nice funeral for him just like we do. As with *EastEnders* too, in the event of bereavement the various families in the soap all come together for the funeral and they do it quite well. But with white people, crying is supposed to be a sign of weakness. If you lose a loved one you are not supposed to be seen crying. So they try hard to contain themselves, hide the tears or wipe them away in such a way that they are not seen to be crying. They may cry in secret, but they don't like to cry in front of people. But in Africa you would be insulted for not showing emotion. The Ashantis in Ghana sometimes hire professional mourners, who are not related to the deceased, to perform at funerals, reciting dirges. What for? Will that bring the dead person back to life? But among the Gas if you weep too much some people may begin to privately question your motives for making a scene and may whisper "is she weeping because she doesn't have enough money to cover the costs of the funeral" (Mrs Quaye, aged 65, grandmother)¹.

¹ Date interviewed: 15-12-2006. The references to Ghana also involve multiple ethnic groups. In this case a distinction is made between the *Ashantis* with their more elaborate funerals, and the *Gas*. See chapter on Ghanaian Diaspora for more on the ethnic make-up of Ghana

In another conversation with Angela, the mother of the *Olive Grove* family¹, reference was made to baby sleeping arrangements prompted by an episode in the soap *Emmerdale* which featured a story involving cot-death, a subject which periodically also appeared on the news. As recounted by Angela, it was a serious issue but it also had bits of humour:

At the burial the minister repeated the usual burial liturgy “God giveth and God taketh away”. That’s how we comfort ourselves. But someone on the set was overcome with emotion because of the enormity of the loss and responded “this time God has taken too much”. I found that bit very funny.

The humour aside there were more profound reflections on the issue such as the personal space that was afforded even babies for cot death to be common. With a self-deprecating sense of humour she half-joked:

In Ghana you hardly have cot, let alone cot-death. The thing is the baby sleeps next to the mother. In the case in *Emmerdale* for instance, had there been anyone close to the baby while it slept, they may have noticed sooner that something was wrong. But here (UK) the baby has its own room and the parents sleep in a separate room. If the baby does not cry no one would know if anything is wrong. Just keep the baby and its cot in your room. But to leave the baby alone in a separate room, we Ghanaians (Africans)² don’t do that. I couldn’t do something like that. When I had my children, each of them slept in a cot near me. They had their own rooms only when they grew older.

Question:

What about the danger of the mother sleeping next to her baby accidentally rolling on top of the baby and suffocating it.

Angela:

That’s the reason why I don’t let the baby sleep next to me in the same bed. But the baby’s cot would be close to my bed so if anything I would hear it. Like you say, in Africa some accidentally smother their babies. She may be breastfeeding the baby and sleeping, and it’s easy for the baby to suffocate because it is not strong enough to push the mother’s breast away. And also if the baby is lying next to the mother it would not be that easy for someone to steal it.

The foregoing conversation merged the fictional representation with the real world as a basis for drawing inferences about white culture. There may be issues of stereotyping, but from the observations, the use of space is culturally defining. Even when there was space to spare, Ghanaian mothers opted for more intimate proximity with their babies. The personal space provided to babies was therefore a significant point of cultural difference and could be linked to the inculcation of a sense of

¹ Date: 28-7-2007

² This was an instance of the fusion of the terms ‘Ghanaian’ and ‘African’ in the vernacular.

individuality in children early in life, an individuality that was linked to modernity. Elsewhere in this thesis attention was drawn to Ghanaian children born in England being conscious of their personal space and complaining that on holiday visits to Ghana they lost that personal space in the more communal environment. The notion of personal space apparently entailed more than physical space. It was a spatial feeling and a sense of ownership about the existential territory of an individual which others needed permission to encroach upon. This sense of personal space was more entrenched in the London-born Ghanaians than was the case with their peers who lived in Ghana. This could be attributed to differences in emphasis on individuality from an early age as seen in the space given to babies in the different cultures: baby in a cot in its own separate room as opposed to baby in mother's bosom in the same room. Such cultural differences appeared in sharp relief to the comparative frame of mind in which the subjects consumed portrayals of other cultures, particularly against the dominant white culture.

Thus the portrayal of aspects of the host white culture on screen often prompted reminiscing and cultural comparisons. Such reflexivity enabled the subjects to evaluate ways of life from the vantage position that alternative perspectives offered. As Edward Said observed: 'Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and the plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal' (Said, 2000: 186). The availability of alternatives enables critique, valorisation, selection, merging, and hybridization. As has already been noted, the comparison and critique of moral standards, reflections on such things as funerals, and attitudes to an individual's personal space, are all cases in point. Other dimensions of these processes are subsequently considered.

7.3.2: Relations in the family:

On-screen drama often thrived on conflict and tension to captivate audiences. In the case of *EastEnders* tension in the family and the stereotype of the rebellious teenager were often exploited. But this grated uncomfortably with Ghanaian viewers raised on conservative mores of respect for elders, and reinforced their impression of British

children as disrespectful in the way that they talked back to their parents and questioned them:¹

Auntie Dei²

There's not a lot of joy watching EastEnders anymore except when something interesting comes along. It's usually conflict, anger, and shouting. The children are so disrespectful. The parents don't set any good example either in the way they conduct their affairs; getting involved in scams and all sorts of devious dealings.

And others agreed:

Look at the characters of teenagers portrayed in the soaps; disrespectful, rude, misbehaving and all that. You never see any decent character role for children played in the soaps. Definitely those watching would be influenced by it. Many parents do not even want their children to watch TV, especially soaps, because children are very impressionable and may imitate what they observe. What they show on TV spoils children (Mrs Quaye, aged 65).³

In some instances real-life incidents seemed to confirm the stereotype. London-born Kwaaley expressed this widespread perception:⁴

Question:

You referred to the way children speak to their parents in the soap. Would that be true to life? Is that a reflection of what happens in real life?

Kwaaley (female, aged 38, Manager):

I think it depicts it. It does happen in real life. I mean I shouldn't say it's all white homes because I'm sure there must be some black people that do speak to their parents like that. But with the people that are in my circle, that sort of behaviour is unacceptable. With the whites, I've actually even seen it for a time because you would be out and about and you hear the way that they speak to their parents and it's not like they're speaking to their parents at all. I remember I met this teenager or a young adult with her mother or whatever. And she was swearing at her mum, literally, using the F-word and everything, and walking around the place. And you could see that the mum was embarrassed by it. And even I had to look away because I just thought this was so awful. This was in ARGOS in Balham⁵. I could picture it now. That's an extreme case, but even just generally you hear the way they would talk and answer back, in a black family that is not happening, generally. That's a big generalisation. In fact the thing that shocks me about that is that for example, this girl was using big swear words. I'm in my 30s but even now I can't even imagine saying something like "shut up" to my mum or dad. As big as I am I wouldn't even dream to speak like that. You've got these young people that would say "ah shut up" and all that kind of stuff. I'm like boy, different world.

¹ Reference has been made to the Walworth Family where the children mentioned that one of the ground rules for them was 'No questioning of parents'.

² Interviewed on 26-12-2006

³ Date interviewed: 15-12-2006

⁴ Interview recorded on the 12-12-2006

⁵ A South London borough

Younger viewers also noted the attitudes of young people towards their parents on the soap, but sometimes saw past the angry outbursts and related to the needs and feelings of the young characters:

This girl on *EastEnders*, her mum wasn't listening to her so she shouted at her mum and she was like "you are not listening to me". She had a conversation with her mum to talk about how she was feeling. She shouldn't have shouted at her mum but I like the fact that she could have that kind of conversation. (Dela aged 14)¹

For such teenagers being able to express their feelings to their parents and be heard was important, something their parents, growing up in a different time and place, did not experience much of, but which this environment allowed. This suggested a greater appreciation of more communicative child/ parent relations among the subjects. Observation also confirmed that British-born Ghanaian children communicated better with their parents than their counterparts in Ghana.

7.3.3: Intergenerational power relations

The nature of the relations between adults and children was the subject of reflection and critique among adult Ghanaians. Programmes like *EastEnders* portrayed that relationship in a conflictual manner drawing on the stereotype of the rebellious youngster which, to people brought up to respect adults and even to fear them, made uncomfortable viewing. Other programmes, such as *Supernanny*, featuring out-of-control and difficult children, reinforced impressions of children's inappropriate behaviour in the presence of adults. Besides, they were considered untouchables because parents were forbidden or inhibited by child protection legislation from disciplining them effectively. One such respondent was Mrs Quaye who was unimpressed by TV portrayals of the conduct of youngsters:

Just look at the soaps and the teenagers. See how their parents fear them because whenever they are forbidden from doing something they can just pick up the phone to report the parent to the authorities. If you insult or smack them they will report you and because of that they do whatever they please. They are headstrong and disrespectful because parents fear them. So for me the African style of discipline is preferable. But now our children are copying the bad attitudes of children on TV. They think it is now fashionable to be disrespectful to your parents. They have an "*I'll-do-what-I-want*" attitude. And yet when there is a problem you can't do it all by yourself. They need their parents to get involved to help. Such attitudes annoy me so much that

¹ Extract from group discussion recorded on 8-1-2007 at Notting Hill Gate, West London

sometimes I change the channel to watch something else rather than young people misbehaving. In an episode in Coronation Street a girl pushed her mother off the stairs and left her unconscious. Apart from that the character was also responsible for other acts of serious misconduct. But at the Television Awards ceremony it was this obnoxious person who got an award. My friend commented that if such roles win awards why would someone else not imitate the bad behaviour in real life ... But in Ghana it is not just your mother or father, it is a whole household watching your conduct. If you do something wrong everyone would tell you off.
(Mrs Quaye, grandmother, aged 65)¹

Such views were obviously informed by impressions gathered from media (especially screen) representations and from real-life. Many adults commented on the unruliness and rowdiness of youngsters in public places, especially on buses, and how they totally disregarded the presence of adults. But the young subjects did not share in the moral panic of adults over the conduct of children and a more balanced view was expressed by one of them: “Some children are really rude in real life but most children I know are just polite” (Dela, aged 14).²

On the opposite side of the spectrum the traditional relationship between Ghanaian adults and children in the homeland was seen as more authoritarian and restrictive on children. The cumulative observations from screen and real life and their own childhood experiences convinced them of the merits of a balance in the power relations between adults and children. In a culture where age-related seniority was associated with maturity, wisdom and knowledge, the power differential between adults and children was greater than in the more liberal Western environment where experts or specialists in particular fields assumed the authority that age-related wisdom and experience conferred on elders in traditional Ghanaian society. The overwhelming majority of adults interviewed, on critical reflection, conceded that the authoritarian vertical model in which they were brought up had its draw-backs and they were unanimously complementary about the horizontal, more communicative adult/ child relations which now obtained and which they wished they had had as children. This included respondents who were more traditionalist in outlook and conservative in their preferences. One such respondent reflected with mixed feelings on the latitude given to children in Britain:

¹ Date: 15-12-2006

² Extract from group discussion recorded on 8-1-2007 at Notting Hill Gate, West London

There is a lot to say for the way we were brought up as children. You could also admit that the freedom given to children in this environment makes them bright and clever. It's a cause and effect situation. Children in this society are always asking questions about everything. They are allowed to experiment. When we were young if you asked a question they asked why. If you tried anything an adult would say something like "Look, you little brat, don't you know you will get hurt?" But apart from that I still like the way children are taught to show respect and how to conduct themselves in the presence of adults in our society. (Mr Peprah, 51, barrister)¹

In the following discussion two middle-aged male interviewees who were inclined towards traditional practices also reflected on the consequences of the authoritarian approach to child rearing:²

Niikwei (aged 60):

The way we bring up children differs from home to home and from generation to generation. The way I was brought up in Ghana influenced the way I raised my children. Home discipline is brought into the moulding of our children born here. And the way they raise their own children will differ from the way we raised them and also differ from the way their white peers raise their children ... They say when you go to Rome you do what the Romans do. Back home we were brought up to show respect. When I came here I realized that the emphasis on respect (for elders/ adults) was good but that approach had its flaws. This is because in the process of inculcating respect fear is induced in the child. There is a difference between children raised back home and children raised here. Because of fear a Ghanaian child back home can't point out a mistake made by their parent even in the most respectful of manners.

Papa Kojo (aged 59):

Your father would interpret that as rebelliousness.

Niikwei:

For that reason your child is not able to point out any mistake you might be making, and even if he tried, an uncle or an aunt would step in to tell him off for being disrespectful or for getting involved in the conversation of adults. We grow up with that fear and carry it over to our work places. And when you belong to a group where the leader is making mistakes you can't complain or talk about it. So we grow up timid. You see things going wrong but you can't say anything. Whereas a child in this environment would say what needs to be said to a parent straightaway without mincing words. We don't have that kind of freedom to express ourselves and so we are always in our shell.

Papa Kojo:

One other thing I have noticed is that Ghanaian parents are quick to stop their children from taking risks or being adventurous. A white parent might allow their child to venture, take a risk and even get hurt doing something, and then seek medical attention. Children are as curious as we all are and the over-zealous restraints we place on them for safety or other reasons make them

¹ Date interviewed: 11-11-2006

² Extract from joint interview recorded at Thornton Heath, south London on 17-1-2007

withdraw into their shells or attempt the forbidden in your absence with potentially more serious consequences.

The comment “*when in Rome do what the Romans do*” was an indication of the negotiating disposition of the subjects in the new environment. They were prepared to adapt, and to adopt aspects of the way of life of the hosts. With their experience of a childhood regime which on reflection, and in the light of other approaches, they now regarded as restrictive, they could afford their children freedoms that they (parents) never had. This was the common view among adult women too. They may be pro-tradition and participate in traditional ceremonies in London, but they, like others were less authoritarian with their children:

I suppose bringing up children here is more of how you reason with children. Back home they don't reason with you if you're a child. If you're a child you're always a child. I'm not sure if that is good. The love care and attention is all there. And if they had as much resources as they have here, I'm sure they'll do more. The only thing lacking is reasoning with children. “Look you little child, I'll beat you if you don't stop that right now”, is the sort of approach to child discipline. They don't give children that opportunity to speak back (Madam Ardee, nurse & mother, aged 50).¹

This less authoritarian approach saw Ghanaian parents like 60 year old Auntie Dei², involving her children in decision-making where necessary:

Back in Ghana as children we were not included in anything. We were told what to do or what the situation was. Adults took all the decisions always. We were never asked for our views, nothing. But there was a time when we went back to Ghana on holidays and our return flight was cancelled, I included my children in the decision making because I felt they needed to express how they felt about it and what they thought we should do together about re-arranging our schedule and return flight.

Question:

So would you say that living in the UK influenced your decision to involve them in the decision making?

Auntie Dei

Yeah, it had a big part to play in it. I don't know whether before I came to England I would have involved my children in a decision like that.

Question:

How would you compare the relationship between children and adults here in the UK to your own childhood experience in Ghana?

Auntie Dei (aged 60, grandmother)

Back home children were seen and not heard. You were addressed before you responded. So we bottled everything inside ourselves. Those attitudes did not make for progress because it did not give you a chance to express your views

¹ Date of interview: 16-12-2006

² Date interviewed: 26-12-2006

on anything. It was a sort of discipline which had shortcomings, but did not do you a lot of harm. On the other hand here (in UK) they (children) are free to express everything. But that also has its shortcomings. A child could talk to an adult in a way that is improper. Their level of respect (for adults) and other things are not too good. So I would say a little bit of this and a little bit of that. There should be a balance somewhere otherwise either your children will walk all over you and embarrass you in public, which I have seen happen, or they become dull, and away from their familiar surroundings, find things difficult.

The statement “*a bit of this and a bit of that*” suggests selective application and synthesis of practices from Ghanaian and British (Western) systems and typifies the process of hybridisation occurring at the junction of the two. This also summed up the reflections amongst adults in the search for balance in adult-child power relations, given their own background experience of adult authoritarianism. This was similar to what Edward Said called the awareness of simultaneous dimensions among exiles; an awareness of alternative approaches and imaginable possibilities which reaches for the best of two or more worlds. Achieving that ideal appeared to lie in the “a bit of this and a bit of that” philosophy. Judging by the responses of the young people themselves in interviews and the way they spoke about respect for parents, that ideal seemed to have been realised in many cases, as the following responses suggest:

¹Nigella, aged 19:

We don't speak to our parents like they do in *Eastenders* – shouting at your mum ... You have to give her respect when talking to her.

²Akosua, girl aged 17:

People swear at their parents and cuss them and shout at them ... but why would I want to speak to my parents like that?

³Yaaley girl, aged 17:

The characters in *EastEnders* are freer to do what they have to do. But with us there may be some restrictions, like what hour one is not supposed to go out and things like that.

And 14 year old girl Dela summed up the balanced home regime they experienced:

At home we are given some freedom. Not too much freedom and not too strict either.⁴

It must be mentioned that perhaps in all cultures, and certainly among Ghanaians, as parents grow old and children grow into adulthood, roles are reversed and children may advise, look after or even censure parents. Isolated instances of rudeness or inappropriate behaviour towards parents may be universal. The references made in

¹ Group interview recorded at Notting Hill Gate on 8-1-2007

² Group interview recorded at Notting Hill Gate on 8-1-2007

³ Black Horse Road Family

⁴ Extract from group interview on 8-1-07, Notting Hill Gate, West London

these responses suggest a widespread impression that such behaviour was, rightly or wrongly, perceived to be more commonplace in Britain.

A window on adult issues and behaviour:

EastEnders brought a general awareness to viewers of the social issues that were dealt with in the episodes. Young viewers were also introduced to adult issues and the way adults behaved in given circumstances. Fred (aged 14) of the *Walworth Family* summed up *EastEnders* as follows:

The stories can be very violent and funny. They deal with cheating in the family. Jane was cheating on Ian. And they gossiped about other people in their pub (Fred, aged 14)¹.

This shows children picked up on the violence, infidelity and the gossip that adults were shown to engage in.² Similarly Ms. Yaaley (aged 17) of the *Tottenham Hale Family*³, referring to a storyline involving a messy divorce noted how vulnerable the children were in that situation and disapproved of the way their mother was trying to manipulate them and to get them on her side against their father, and the way she was keeping them away from him. Yaaley suggested:

The right thing would be to let him see them and for her to get along with the husband so you have a reasonable divorce rather than a war.

Undoubtedly this was a mature view of a difficult subject such as divorce from a teenager in a stable family and without a personal experience of family breakup. This in itself may be attributable in large measure to experience which comes from the media saturated environment in addition to various forms of education and

¹ Interview with Walworth Family children on 8-10-2006

² Joshua Meyrowitz makes some prescient observations about television and draws attention to the role of **television in blurring the distinctions between childhood and adulthood**. He argues that children who have access to television have outside perspectives from which to judge and evaluate family activities and that television exposes many adult secrets to children (Meyrowitz, 1986: 238). Besides, television's exposure of the "staging of adulthood", with its secret-keeping and the secret of secrecy, undermines both traditional childhood naiveté and the all-knowing, confident adult role and fosters the movement toward a "middle region", uni-age behavioural style (1986: 249). These arguments generally affirm some of the findings of this study, given the consequences of television as a shared arena where people of all ages often share the same or very similar information at the same time. The same may be said of the sharing of social knowledge between children and adults. Children do not need a first hand experience to understand issues, and as in the above example of Yaaley, they acquire mature perspectives on adult issues early. In some cases children get better informed than adults. In soaps such as *EastEnders*, secrets of adulthood are exposed to children and adulthood is demystified for children. This may undermine the perception of adults in the eyes of children and could be contributory to the closing of the gap in power relations between adults and children. While it is difficult to make any conclusive declarations or gauge the impact of television quantitatively or qualitatively, the cumulative evidence suggests that television is a significant factor in these changes, alongside other social factors.

³ Date: 27-1-2007

socialisation. It also demonstrates the knowledge capital that the subjects brought to the processing of television programmes. Young people and adults alike drew on the vast social and mediated experiences and knowledge as a resource for interpreting and digesting what they viewed on screen.

7.3.4: Representation of Blacks in *EastEnders*

The diversity of black people, discussed at length in chapter five, meant that the representation of blackness in the multiracial community would be problematic. In *EastEnders* the producers appeared to settle for Afro-Caribbeans¹ as a token representation of blacks. It provided an interesting view of blackness from the perspective of the white scriptwriters of the soap and of what the subjects thought of the portrayal of blackness. Over the years, criticism of the stereotyping of minorities² on the soap appeared to have influenced adjustments later made to the representations. A black doctor was introduced into the soap, but this did not obviate critical observation of black representation by both young and adult Ghanaian viewers:

There was a time when I wished that they would stop putting black people in Eastenders because I didn't like the way they were representing black people on there. I mean I'm happy for the actors because they are getting work. But in terms of what they do and representing, they don't represent any black people that I know. And even though they don't behave like black people it's because they are such good actors. In Eastenders you know you've got the ones that own the supermarket - I don't remember his name - Rudolf Walker, that's it. He's an old black actor back in the day. If any other person was playing that part it wouldn't be acceptable, but because he is such a good actor and he's got such personality, somehow he is acceptable. But even the way he behaves is not like any black person I would know. It's a shame because they take all these good actors and give them silly roles. And even when they try and make them sound like black people, it just seems so forced. You can tell that it's a white person writing the script and they've got no idea about blacks.

(Ms. Kwaaley, aged 38, Manager. Date interviewed: 12-12-2006)

Other respondents expressed similar sentiments at different times:

Angela:

¹ The Trueman family on the set was black and of Afro-Caribbean origins and was headed by Patrick Trueman who spoke with a Caribbean accent, played by Rudolph Walker. Past Black characters include Alan Jackson, an unemployed plumber; Angel, a gold-toothed gangster; Anthony Trueman, a young doctor who struggled to maintain his dignity and career; Paul Trueman, a charming rogue and a gambler (2001); Nee Fox, a widowed, mother played by Dianne Parish who first appeared in 2006 with daughters Chelsea and Libby Fox (played by Ghanaian Belinda Owusu); And Gus Smith, a cleaner and singer. Sources: www.bbc.co.uk/EastEnders - date accessed 14-4-2007.

² Complaints came from the Irish, Asians and Blacks at different times about stereotyping of their communities.

Their inability to deal with black people in their stories is obvious. They don't know how to write good lines for black people. So when they introduce black characters after a while they run out of ideas, then they get rid of them because there is no proper role. (Angela aged 44, White Hart Lane Family)¹

Mrs Quaye:

Has a black character ever been given a good role in *Eastenders*? Cleaning, sweeping the streets and that kind of thing. You know that the black people don't last long in the soaps. Black and Asian characters appear for a short while and then they (script writers) find a way to kill off the character or remove them from the story ... Much of the soap is about white society. Their culture is what they know, though sometimes they try to mix in other cultures. Sometimes they just imagine things for their storylines (Mrs Quaye, grandmother, aged 65).²

This common perception was also shared by younger viewers:

The black guy in *Eastenders* called Gus, he is not really involved in the soap that much. He just sweeps the streets, which is not really a great role, but he is a nice person. When he comes in the episodes and he talks to people he is really friendly. There is another black man but he was acting as the gay man. So me and my brother thought that it was disappointing 'cos it always has to be like the black person that does something not all that good. (Ms. Yaaley, aged 17)³

The peripheral role of the black cleaner could be considered an epitome for the role of blacks in the soap in general; not central and cast in unglamorous roles. Paul explains:

Personally I don't think that black people are well represented I don't think the black people in *Eastenders* portray the real lives of black people in Britain. *Eastenders*, *Coronation Street*, the biggest soaps in Britain, you don't see many black people in them. In *Eastenders* a couple of bad black people, but there's 20 white people on the show (laughter). And the characters don't represent black people properly. They make the black people act white. Sometimes they talk like a white person, like "gosh". But we don't talk like that. We don't go "oh yes jolly yeah" and those kinds of things (Paul aged 17, Olive Grove Family)⁴

Here the complaint is about under-representation in terms of population ratio, and the questionable authenticity of black characterisation. The assessment of acting quality and of character was generally kept separate (as in Kwaaley's comments). But given the diversity of blackness it begs the question of what a universally acceptable representation of blackness should be. And so when the issue of black representation

¹ Date of interview: 28-7-2006

² Date of interview: 15-12-2006

³ Blackhorse Road Family - D.O.I: 27-12-2007

⁴ Date of interview: 2-10-2006

came up at the *Enfield family* home, mother of three, Mrs Boateng¹, suggested that people who complained about black people not being cast according to their expectations ought to realize that the programme had a wide audience and could not pander to certain sub-cultural stereotypes or allow such things as bad language in the name of 'being real', or meet the expectations of a specific ethnic group. She added

People can choose the way they live or speak, but they should not expect programmes to be exactly the way they or others live

This critical perspective breaks ranks with a common point of view about black representation and takes into account broader purposes of producers and the various other audiences of the programme, and demonstrates an awareness that transcends mere in-group protestations. Like other responses this indicates a good understanding of media production considerations and the complex relationship between fictive representations and the real life issues from which they are usually derived.

Viewers' critical review of black representation revisits the theme of their strategic identification with blackness via the media (previously discussed in chapter 5). These were ideological judgements linked to the consciousness and salience of race and racism as a context of their sojourn in Britain. Racial discourses and characterisations² were of interest to them as minorities in a white world where representation was also about power. Dyer argues that how social groups are treated in cultural representation is part and parcel of how they are treated in life; that poverty, harassment, self hate, and discrimination, are shored up and instituted by representation: 'how we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation' (Dyer, 1993:1).

The portrayal of Blackness provided cues about how the subjects were regarded in society. By and large such representations were often considered demeaning and at variance with their (subjects') self-perception. Implicit in their critical observations was the assumption that the depiction of blacks in the media in general, as in *EastEnders*, was done from a White perspective and reflected a White-dominated power hierarchy. This was borne out in statements already cited, such as:

- 'There was a time when I wished that *they* would stop putting black people in *Eastenders* because I didn't like the way *they* were representing black people on there' (Kwaaley, 38);

¹ Mother of 3, Enfield Family, Date of visit & conversation: 8-10-2006

² These issues are discussed at length in chapters 4 & 5 as a backdrop to the Ghanaian experiences

- 'Black and Asian characters appear for a short while and then *they* (programme makers) find a way to kill off the character or remove them from the story... Much of the soap is about white society. *Their* culture is what they know, though sometimes *they* try to mix in other cultures' (Mrs Quaye, 65);
- '*Their* inability to deal with Black people in their stories is obvious' (Angela, 44);
- '*They* make the black people act white' (Paul aged 17)

The use of the third person plural is significant. It sums up their feeling that the whole system of representations was controlled by White people whose depiction of blackness was often imagined and fraught with inaccuracies and unfitting stereotypes. A black cleaner in a Ghanaian drama would have no extra significance other than to be a reflection of a society where doctors and other top professionals as well as people in menial jobs were all black. But a black cleaner in *EastEnders* was a different matter because of the racial and power issues involved in the representation. The makers of *EastEnders*, aware of such implications, tried at times to address the issue, but even when they introduced a black doctor character into the soap, he was still seen as a peripheral and token figure by critical viewers. Given the history of racism and the diversity of blackness, the representation of blacks in a drama like *EastEnders*, produced from white perspectives, was inevitably going to be a minefield.

Comparatively, the representation of blackness produced from black perspectives in African drama and black American programmes, subsequently discussed, appeared to be unencumbered by the fixation with racial stereotypes that defined otherness, and the ideological preoccupations that usually characterised white representation of blacks. Self-representation afforded blacks the freedom to laugh at themselves and their foibles, be self-critical, as well as express black aspiration and ambition in ways that black viewers appreciated and could identify with. They understood and projected their own cultures better than outsiders did. Graphic depiction of slum areas and poverty in African drama did not provoke viewer criticism in the manner that white (western) focus on black deprivation did.¹ In the case of the former, filming was not selective, and so apart from the slums and shacks, they also showed affluent places and plush mansions, juxtaposing wealth with poverty as was true in real life, unlike the programmes made from western perspectives which were perceived to be selective in their focus and designed with preconceived objectives and motives, and hence were viewed with suspicion, even when produced in good faith.

¹ These issues are further discussed under the Newswatch theme in chapter 9

Overall, the general impression gained from the subjects was of under-representation in terms of the inclusiveness of blacks in national representations (demographic ratios), and misrepresentation in terms of the characterisation of blacks. However, a universally acceptable representation of blackness was unattainable due to the diversity of black peoples, as well as the practical considerations of media production values and ideologies, and the pressure to cater to dominant tastes in the wider viewing public. This was what was alluded to by Mrs Boateng in her response to concerns expressed about black representation in the soap.

7.4: American Sitcoms

7.4.1: Patterns of appropriation:

American sitcoms, on Sky channels such as *Trouble*, were very popular with the younger generation of Ghanaian-Londoners and included such shows as *That's So Raven*, *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *My Wife and Kids*, *Girlfriends*, and *The Cosby Show*, episodes of teen drama and pop music videos featured on MTV, which young respondents referred to in the discussions on music cultures. Incidentally, most of these programmes may be described as 'black' on account of being the expressions of blacks. But the subjects explained that they watched them not because they were 'black' per se, but because they were interesting, and they cited 'white' programmes that caught their interest, including comedies such as '*Little Britain*' and '*Grounded for Life*'. Nicola, a teenager from the *White Hart Lane Family* whose viewing preferences followed the general pattern among the young subjects, explains:

My favourite programmes include *My Wife and Kids*, *That's So Raven*, and *Fresh Prince*. It's just a coincidence that they happen to be black programmes, but they have white people in them as well. I just find the American programmes funnier than the British ones (Nicola, schoolgirl aged 14)¹

As young people their regular appropriation of such programmes informed their social perspectives and understanding of aspects of urban youth culture, significantly influenced by 'black' culture.

7.5: Comparing cultures through consumption:

¹ Date of interview: 7-10-2007

According to the young subjects, American programmes were distinguishable on the basis of the American accents and the scenery. They also suggested that another distinguishing feature was that they portrayed more relaxed family relations in which children seemed to have greater freedoms than they had in the UK. Yaaley, a 17 year old girl, from the *Tottenham Hale Family*¹ makes this point:

Yaaley:

American programmes are very interesting. We can find out different things about them. The British ones, because we live here we find them more common, but the American ones we just want to watch because it's a different atmosphere and the way they think is different as well.

Question:

How different is the American teenage lifestyle as seen on screen from British teenagers?

Yaaley:

I think it's about the same. Their school classes and everything is just like ours. But sometimes it does seem like they have more freedom. Their parents trust them more. Their teenagers are more mature than UK teenagers. You can see that on their programmes. They are able to go out, they drive at a young age, and are more mature.

Question:

Which programmes give the impression of their greater freedom?

Yaaley:

Programmes such as *'My Wife and Kids'* and a white American comedy called *'Grounded for Life'* and things like that. *My Wife and Kids* is about black American family life. What their teenagers go through we go ... what we go through they express it better and make it more understandable, including how their parents deal with it as well. It's not really too different. It depends on the parents and how they discipline their children.

This indicated how some teenagers compared their experiences with those of their peers in other cultural contexts, in this case across the Atlantic. Despite the broad similarities in lifestyle, even subtle differences stood out and the perception was of greater freedoms for teenagers in America matched by a seemingly equal sense of responsibility from them. They were seen as more mature than their British peers. Such perceptions fed into young people's aspirations for greater freedom and the kind of family life in which young people had frank and open conversation with parents.

At the *Streatham Hill Family*² home, the children made a three-way comparison between college drama they watched on screen, their experiences at school in London,

¹ Date of interview: 27-1-2007

² Date of interview: 6-4-2006. All the family members were born in Ghana. Unlike the other young subjects the children in this family had schooled in Ghana.

and their previous experiences in Ghana. They noted how the easy-going regime they observed on screen corresponded to the liberal regimes in their local London schools, and compared it to the tough discipline they experienced in Ghana:

Nat schoolboy aged 14:

What they show in college drama on TV is similar but not exactly the same as what happens in our school in London. At our school in London, the students sometimes misbehave in class and when they get into trouble they call their parents to come and back them up and stuff. The students don't pay attention to the teacher and do as they are told. When they come to the class late and the teacher queries them, they start moaning and start swearing at the teacher. Here (UK) the teachers just talk to the offender and they offend again because they know that they will only be given detention and they don't really care. But in Ghana when you misbehave you get caned and corrected and you wouldn't do the same thing again.

Naadu, schoolgirl aged 11:

Also in London sometimes when children return from school they go into their bedroom and maybe play video games or fall asleep and are hardly told to do their homework.

This obvious generalisation may have been based on observation in real life and onscreen. Even six year old Sam, the youngest of the siblings, also made a similar observation from the screen depiction of family life and home discipline:

In *Zack and Cody* (children's TV comedy series) when the children are naughty they are told they are grounded by their parents. It means that they would not go out of the house. But in Ghana when children do something wrong their parents would shout at them and sometimes they beat children who are naughty. And children respect their parents. At my school in London sometimes the children are naughty and they insult the teachers. And when the teacher tells them to stop their work or something, they don't stop, and they would be moaning (grumbling). When children are rude, they are just put in detention and made to miss their playtime. When they make noise the teacher would mark a cross against their name and when they get three crosses they will miss their playing time. If they get more than three crosses they will be sent to the headmistress' office (Sam aged 6)

Their disciplinarian school backgrounds in Ghana contrasted sharply with the liberal school culture they experienced in London which seemed to correspond to what they witnessed on screen. They saw merits and demerits in both systems. They appreciated the sheer variety of school activities in their London schools, and while they preferred the soft approach to discipline for themselves, they thought the Ghanaian type of tough discipline was better for their unruly peers in London because of its deterrence and effectiveness. They also believed from what they saw on TV that some parents indulged their children and condoned easy-going lifestyles including partying, staying

out late, sometimes even truancy. Overall, therefore they thought children in Britain and America enjoyed more freedom which they also coveted.

Ghanaian children born in London who never had a first-hand experience of the system of discipline in Ghana, sometimes learned about it from their parents, as was the case with this teenage respondent:

My parents told me about how they went to boarding school in Ghana, woke up early to tidy up and ... lessons, provisions, how they used chop-boxes and things like that. I think their experiences were different from ours today, but also hard. They did get beaten and all that but I don't want to get beaten and all that stuff. But then I would like to experience it for a bit, but not for too long ... Here school pupils who are disruptive do get disciplined but not as much as I would probably like them to, or as much as they would if they went to Ghana. Here they only get sent out of the classroom or detention (Dela, girl aged 14)¹.

Thus directly or indirectly, informed by parents or gathered from watching television, the younger generation became aware of alternative worlds of experience which they were in a position to evaluate on comparative basis. Whether it was models of school discipline or family relationships, or peer group behaviour, on-screen and in real life, comparisons engendered appreciations and informed their conclusions. Alternative perspectives enabled even young children to figure out what was preferable and to exercise a sense of selective appropriation. That they identified merits and demerits in the different systems indicated evaluation competences, positive discrimination between competing alternatives, and appreciation of values.

At the *White Hart Lane Family* home, London-born Danny, aged 18, also picked up on subtle differences between families featured in American sitcoms and their experience as a family in London:²

In *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*³ they are wealthy. They have a wealthy uncle, and they have everything easy but here we have to work from the bottom to the top. Their relationship with their parents is like a friendly approach, not much getting into trouble and everything. As for the adults, I don't think they behave the way they would do in real life. Because it's a sitcom they act more jokingly and more friendly for the camera.

This kind of sitcom based on a fictional representation of a black American family, was one of many, and involved a portrayal of family relations. Viewers, as with other

¹ Date of interview: 8-1-2007

² Date of interview: 7-10-2006

³ US comedy series which features Will Smith.

forms of film drama, recognised it as fiction but indulged in the escapist pleasure that it provided by its humorous portrayal of interaction between family members. Viewers entered the world of the fiction to laugh with, and at the characters. Although fiction, viewers gathered impressions about what they considered as a depiction of an American way of life of opulence in the plush neighbourhoods and big mansions as seen in the suburban *Bel-Air*, the interior furnishing of the family home, and comfortable easy-going lifestyles and freedoms. Young Americans were shown to have things easy with their ‘more friendly’ parents. But this was more or less a construct which viewers were invited to buy into. The depictions may be close to the real-life experience of middle class American families, black, white and other, but far from the reality of life for other Americans. Nevertheless it served as a model that contrasted with the subjects’ more modest circumstances in inner London.

Danny also accepted that in London, families like his were not wealthy and had to “work from the bottom up” (the socio-economic ladder), a realistic appraisal of their working-class situation that also expressed aspirations for upward mobility which meant taking their educational opportunities seriously¹. A casual survey among young people in interviews revealed their aspirations to various middle-class professions. They wanted to become engineers, lawyers, and accountants, among other aspirations. Some families, such as the *Black Horse Road*, and *Olive Grove families*, made efforts to back up their ambitions for their children by paying for private extra tuition at home to supplement school work, hiring private teachers to help boost their children’s performance at school in key subjects like mathematics. Furthermore, it was confirmed in one group interview² that young subjects’ career choices were influenced by guidance or pressure from parents, but also sometimes linked to inspiration from screen drama, as a teenaged respondent pointed out:

I like watching legal drama for inspiration as I would like to become a lawyer. You get to observe how the system works. I got selected for the London Olympics by my school because I am good at athletics, and I had the opportunity to sign a contract towards training for the 2012 London Olympics. But my family discouraged me from taking sports further. Our family have professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and teachers and so they tend to look down on a career in sports (Ruth, aged 17).

¹ All the young people involved in this study were at different levels of full-time education, with the parents also engaged in various occupations, further education, or re-training.

² Group interview of young people conducted at Notting Hill Gate, West London on 8-1-2007

For some young people, therefore, such screen models, while providing entertainment, also fuelled aspirations. But the more immediate inspiration and encouragement, (and sometimes pressure) came from parents and teachers.

Thus the ‘consumption’ of sitcoms and other programmes provide indications of the influences, and subtle inducements involved in mediated experience. In the intimate proximity of the living room, the dissolution of distance in the reception process meant an immediate juxtaposition of supposedly ‘distant’ lifestyles across the Atlantic with the lived experience of the subjects in London. Affluent suburban America was juxtaposed to the modest neighbourhoods of inner London where the subjects lived; the spacious living environment contrasted with the restricted spaces of inner-city housing in London; their family life (in the U.S) ‘sanitised’ for viewing purposes, depicted easy-going, happy families, purged of real-life unpredictability and fateful events, a far cry from the realities of the lives of viewers. Such screen portrayals, therefore, although fiction, because they were constructed around characters and situations that viewers could relate to, served as vehicles for influential ideologies and were nurseries of ideals. The curtain between on-screen fiction and lived experience then becomes a permeable membrane that allows the osmosis of ideas and alternative possibilities of greater freedoms and fulfilments, real and imagined.

7.6: Summary and Conclusions - EastEnders

The consumption of serials such as EastEnders and Coronation Street primarily for entertainment and the media saturated environment in general, had social, intercultural, and intergenerational implications for Ghanaian-Londoners and their place in the world.

- ***Socialisation:*** EastEnders and other soaps were often watched and reviewed in a social context. The soaps served, for both young and old subjects, as a means of socialising within and across group boundaries, sustaining communion with others in small groups of common viewing interest. Meanings were negotiated or exchanged and social knowledge shared. Social discourse privately engaged in was recycled through drama for consumption and hence “re-socialised” (Scannell, 1989), thereby providing mediated social experience for the subjects.

- ***Symbolic identifications:*** Through the act of consumption they identified with millions of others sharing a similar experience. Regular ‘consumption’ of the soap opera was a form of participation in a national pastime with socio-cultural integration potential. Furthermore, the various focal issues dealt with in the serials created awareness among the various categories of viewers, including children, within and across communities, keeping them abreast with such issues and their social implications, where disparities in levels of information and awareness might otherwise have been accentuated.
- ***Reception skills:*** Like other viewers, they recognised the drama as fiction and indulged in escapism. But far from being impressionable objects of programme ideologies they were discerning viewers who critically reviewed what they watched, assessing the drama from ‘within’ and from ‘outside’ the fiction world of the soap on perceived merits and flaws. They made moral and ideological judgements and commented on acting quality. This was evidence of skills of appropriation that underscored the acquired cultural, social, and media capital that they brought to their viewing experience.
- ***Moral judgements:*** EastEnders was set in the context of a changing society in which traditional morality was confronted with assertive alternative lifestyles and moral standards. Previously unconventional relationships were now becoming acceptable in society and being reflected in the soap. The moral judgements provoked among the subjects by issues raised on the soap defined them on the basis of their conservative moral values linked to their cultural background. Exposure to alternative lifestyles engendered dispositions of toleration and an acceptance of the realities of social change, even though they preferred to retain their conservative values.
- ***Window on the host culture:*** The subjects generally constructed their imagination of whiteness from screen projections and real life encounters and the British soaps were a good screen resource. Generally, EastEnders was considered as portraiture of white working-class society with a bit of multicultural flavour. Regular viewers of the soaps observed an approximate portrayal of the domestic and social behaviour of the ‘indigenes’ close-up, an exposé which provided cues about the

host socio-cultural environment, particularly to the older generation of Ghanaians in London. This also offered alternative perspectives on cultural differences and fostered negotiations linked to the production of hybridity.

- ***Inter-generational relations:*** The cumulative observations from screen and real life by the older generation of Ghanaians and their own childhood experiences convinced them of the merits of horizontal, more communicative relations between adults and children that allowed children to express themselves, rather than the vertical, authoritarian model that many of them had been brought up under, where children were ‘seen and not heard’. Feedback from children indicated that the result was a balance of more freedom for children, but also respect for parents deriving from a transmission of parental values. The result was therefore moderation as elements of the alternative traditions were merged.
- ***Adulthood demystified:*** In soaps such as *EastEnders*, young viewers are introduced to the way some adults behave in given situations and circumstances. Secrets of adulthood are exposed to children and adulthood is demystified for children. This may undermine the perception of adults in the eyes of children and could be contributory to the closing of the gap in power relations between adults and children. For the Ghanaian families, this was mitigated by the circumstances and dynamics of family life and conduct of parents. Their parents’ conduct in real life, more often than not, mitigated the impressions about adults gathered from the soaps, reminding children that not all adults behaved inappropriately in given situations. But as in the case cited by teenager Dela, the soaps also provided examples of children confronting their parents with their feelings and frustrations, and for adult viewers such episodes were reminders of the importance of better communication with their children.
- ***Black representation:*** Viewers critically reviewed the way blacks were represented in stories. It was inferred that blacks were peripheral in the soap(s), and were cast in unglamorous roles and usually had a short on-screen lifespan. The general impression, therefore, was of under-representation in terms of population ratios, and misrepresentation in terms of the characterisation of blacks. However, a universally acceptable representation of blackness was unattainable

due to the diversity of black peoples, production values and ideologies, and the need to cater to dominant tastes and preferences, and as has been demonstrated, some viewers recognised this. Black American sitcoms, however, managed to navigate this ideological quagmire.

7.7: Summary and Conclusions - American sitcoms

American sitcoms mediated a sense of humour, visual representations and family dynamics which viewers found refreshing and entertaining. Blacks were better represented and cast in central roles. Black characterisation was not mired in stereotypes like was often the case when others tried to represent blackness. The juxtaposition of screen and real-life brought up other contrasts:

- ***Opulence v Austerity:*** Though fiction, viewers gathered impressions about what they considered as a portrayal of an American way of life of opulence in the plush suburban neighbourhoods and big mansions as seen in the fictional suburban *Bel-Air* and others. Family homes were comfortably furnished and the impression was of easy-going lifestyles. This may be close to the real-life experiences of middle-class American families, but far from the reality of life for other Americans. Nevertheless it served as a model that contrasted with the subjects' more modest circumstances in inner London, fostering aspirations to such comforts.
- ***Family freedoms:*** Young Ghanaian-Londoners watching American sitcoms observed broad similarities in lifestyle between them (the subjects) and American youth. But there was a general perception that young Americans were accorded greater freedoms by parents and had easygoing relationships with their 'more friendly' parents. They seemed to be more mature and to have a greater sense of responsibility than their British peers. Such perceptions fed into young viewers' aspirations for greater freedom and the kind of family life in which young people could be friends with and have frank and open conversation with parents.
- ***Alternative models:*** To young subjects relatively new to England, screen and real life seemed to imitate each other in this new environment. They observed other models of school discipline and family relationships and drew parallels and contrasts with their own. They could evaluate the alternative models at their

disposal and figure out what was preferable, even if for aspirational purposes only. The critical evaluation underscored their capacity to discern and selectively assemble the merits of the worlds of their experience.

Thus directly or indirectly, informed by parents or experienced through mediation, the younger generation, aware of alternative worlds of experience, were in a position to do a comparative evaluation. Whether it was models of school discipline or family relationships, or peer group behaviour, on screen and in real life, comparisons exercised their skills of evaluation, brought a greater appreciation of freedoms and of values, and informed their conclusions. The combination of mediated and situated experiences such as are highlighted in these discussions therefore had wider, often imperceptible, social, cultural, moral and ideological implications for the subjects, subtly influencing their mindsets.

CHAPTER 8

AFRICAN PROGRAMMES

Outline:

- Introduction
- Ghana on mainstream British TV
- Identity & Nostalgia-related viewing
- Didactic and social uses of African drama
- The Supernatural element: Art imitating life?
- Summary and Conclusions

8.0 : Introduction:

The phenomenon of exiled communities and individuals hankering after home-grown products is commonplace around the world and has been noted as a major reason for the so-called ‘reverse-flows’ of cultural products from the developing world to the advanced countries where significant numbers of their populations now live. The reverse-flows argument (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991; Boyd-Barrett and Thussu, 1992) comes against the backdrop of the perception of disproportionality in the flow of cultural goods from the advanced economies to the less developed world and threatening the diversity of the world’s cultures. This was at times rendered in the inappropriate language of cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991) which implied cultural imposition, a suggestion that is refuted not least because of the voluntary nature of the appropriations. The growth in importance of the Telenovelas away from their South American origins and of ‘*Bollywood*’ (Indian) films among South Asian communities in Britain, are cited as examples of reverse flows. To this category may be added programmes from African sources such as *Nollywood*, (Nigerian film industry), producers of much of the African drama watched by Ghanaians, whose films have not equalled the success of the prolific Nigerian film industry, currently the undisputed leaders in African film production.

One of the outcomes of the availability of film-making technology and the consequent proliferation of African films is the freedom it affords Africans to portray their culture from their own perspective as opposed to outsiders’ (western) perspectives. In terms of content ‘*Nollywood*’ and the smaller units of African film producers bring something different to the menu of global cultural consumption in the portrayal of

African culture, despite not commanding the same audience share as Hollywood. The vast collection of African material being produced and circulated serves as a cultural resource for Africans abroad and adds to the social historical film archive of African culture.

African programmes featured significantly in the TV viewing patterns of Ghanaian-Londoners despite being rare on mainstream terrestrial British television. Niche TV channels on Sky satellite platforms such as OBE TV (Original Black Entertainment TV), Passion TV, BEN TV (Black Entertainment Network TV), and others, provided a variety of programmes from across Africa and beyond. OBE TV in particular was regarded by many Ghanaian viewers as a Ghanaian TV station, providing Ghanaian programmes, and sometimes in Ghanaian languages. But its scope was wider and it featured programmes from across Africa, including Nigerian films, which for Ghanaian viewers were good equivalents, substitutes, or supplements for Ghanaian films because of the broad similarities in cultures between the two West African neighbours. For the subjects and their children in particular, the African films served as a means of reconnecting with African culture.

This chapter, which includes views on African programmes produced by the BBC, explores the motivations, patterns, and implications of the viewing of African programmes; how they are received and processed in the context of a western cultural hub such as London, and how the contrasting cultural orientations are reconciled or integrated into the lives of the subjects.

8.1: Ghana on mainstream British TV:

Mainstream British TV programmes that featured Ghana were rare and brief.

Ghanaians usually reacted to anything about Ghana on mainstream British TV with excitement and they phoned friends and relatives to draw attention to it. Sometimes, the fleeting footage would be over before those alerted tuned in. And later in conversations, some would ask, “*did you see the bit about Ghana on TV*”?

But it was different in 2006, when the BBC programmed a series called ‘Africa lives on the BBC’. This included some Holby City episodes filmed on locations in Ghana with a storyline purposefully developed around a Ghanaian-British member of the cast – Hugh Quarshie - whose screen character was a doctor, which itself was

significant and reflected a positive response by the BBC programme makers to criticisms that blacks and other ethnic minorities were usually stereotyped or cast in unglamorous roles in TV serials. Filming took place at hospitals in three of the major cities in Ghana – Accra, Kumasi and Cape Coast, capturing the outdoor scenery and some activities of the locals in the background. Apparently, the rationale for filming in three major hospitals in Ghana was to raise awareness about the challenges faced in their healthcare system, particularly the need for equipment, in order to draw the attention and assistance of well-meaning philanthropists or charities. Unsurprisingly many Ghanaian viewers followed the series with interest and privately commended the BBC for taking the trouble to go all the way to film episodes in Ghana. ‘*I was surprised they did it*’, commented 44 year old mother Alice.¹ ‘*Because of that I actually watched Holby City which I normally didn’t watch. They made that effort*’. Mrs Quaye (aged 65) also picked up on an aspect of the rationale of the programme – the disparity in resources:

Even with the leading Ghanaian hospitals featured in the episode you could see the difference in standards between them and British hospitals. But I was glad that we were in the headlines.²

The high profile that the rare extended feature of Ghana on a major British TV serial conferred on Ghanaians in general was a source of pride. In other instances, however, the reaction was mixed:

It’s good occasionally to have such programmes. If people want to visit historic sites back home they can, but I don’t think there should be more programmes about locations back home and all that. It’s not making any changes to the way others think about us. The past is the past. When you keep going back you don’t move on. (Mrs Odoi, 43)³

The reason for this ambiguity is not obvious but there is a sense of a lack of awareness or a misunderstanding of the purpose of the programme and almost a fatigue with what some considered as the censorious white gaze on Africa. In another interview these nuanced sentiments were more explicitly expressed:

Question: What did you make of the BBC filming *Holby City* in Ghana for their ‘Africa lives on the BBC’ theme?

Answer (Mr. Abankwah):

¹ Olive Grove Family. Date: 9-2-2007

² Second interview: 20-4-2008

³ Black Horse Road Family Date: 14-1-2007

I must have seen snippets of it. My views are not necessarily mainstream. I have a problem with people going to Ghana or Africa to film. They have some preconceived ideas as to what the audience back home (in Britain or Europe) would like to see. When TV organisations from Europe or America go to Ghana, (or Africa) they want the thing (programmes) to be different from what their audiences are used to and so sometimes they tend to go out of their way to try to make it authentic (from their point of view) to the detriment of the reality of that environment. For example you and I know that when you go to a place like Accra (capital of Ghana) there are certain areas, beautiful residential areas, decent homes, streets and so forth, but people from this part of the world (westerners) when they are filming, they are not interested in decent neighbourhoods. They prefer the ghettos, the dirt, because that somehow is what makes them feel superior because they are showing this to people. Because of that I have to question the motives behind some of those things. There are lots of things to know. The bad things are shown, but the good things are shelved because nobody is interested in them. I am a Ghanaian and I go home often and know of nice and interesting places ... Apart from seeing places like Sudan, Darfur, people starving, dying, etc. do you see any of the good things that you know exist? That tells me they are being selective. There is a bias. There is a deliberate attempt to colour Africa in a way that would interest people because it makes them superior.
(Mr. Abankwah, aged 59, lawyer)¹

This response reflects perceptions on the ideological motivations of Westerners (as outsiders) filming or documenting Africa, a theme which was revisited each time there was a feature on Africa or Ghana which was deemed by viewers as unflattering or negative typecasting. This perception overshadowed this attempt by the BBC to rebalance perspectives in coverage on Africa as it did with the casting of a black doctor in Hugh Quarshie, the Ghanaian actor around whom the storyline was developed for the episodes filmed on location in Ghana. Ordinarily this would be a laudable effort by the giant corporation to reflect the positive inclusiveness of ethnic minorities in its programming. But the sceptical views show entrenched suspicions of Western motives among some of the subjects, derived from a long familiarity with ideologically influenced fare on mainstream TV involving the portrayal of others from a Western perspective which Van Dijk identified in his discussion of Western news values (1988: 155-6). The representation of Africa in the Western media was usually dominated by the all too familiar focus on poverty, hunger, disease, and perpetual conflict, with virtually no redeeming features. The delight in seeing something about Ghana on TV was often punctured by the realisation that it was selective and not always positive. As a respondent observed, *'even the news of the day*

¹ Date interviewed: 3-2-2007

when they go to Ghana, they'll show downtown, they never show uptown'.¹ Such reflections were tinged with a sense of resignation and disempowerment. But their presence in the West together with other minorities with similar concerns over representation was influencing change in attitudes and the BBC's efforts in seeking an adequate representation of minorities was evidence of this.

It may therefore be inferred that living in the West brings to Ghanaians an acute awareness of the ideological nature of media portrayals of different groups of people historically derived from othering perspectives. This was frustrating for the subjects in their desire for a more balanced media portrayal of themselves, their homeland and culture. In addition to their marginal voices slowly filtering through to corporate ears, the digital revolution now affords them and other minority groups the means to represent themselves, and to bring other perspectives to the table. With it there is now the possibility of the devolution of the powers of media representation, hitherto concentrated in western media institutions with their vast resources by which they portrayed people and places from particular perspectives which sometimes demeaned those they described. This means that the subjects are increasingly able to access Ghanaian/ African programmes on niche channels and in video format, developed from African perspectives, though not without Western influences. The themes, patterns, and implications of the appropriation of such 'home-grown' programmes by the subjects are subsequently explored.

8.2: Identity and nostalgia-related viewing:²

Places are an important source of identity for individuals and communities. Among the subjects, references to the homeland were frequent. Attachment to places where they grew up was a source of nostalgia in the older generation of Ghanaian-Londoners and this played a part in their desire for African programmes, some of which captured bye-gone cultural moments and served more of a romantic purpose since life 'back home' may have moved on from what it used to be in the ever-changing modern world, where time-space distancing and disembedding mechanisms (Giddens) are accelerating change everywhere. Features of the African environment such as the

¹ Doris, London-born Ghanaian respondent, aged 32. Interview recorded on the 16-12-2006

² For more on nostalgia (origins etc) see Glossary of terms in Appendix

landscape, people, customs, beliefs and practices portrayed in drama and documentaries often evoked memories of their native land where 'home' used to be.

During a visit to the *Walworth Family*¹ Mrs Ankrah flicked through some Nigerian clips on BEN TV² before finally settling for a variety programme on OBE TV³ where an African dance troupe in yellow grass skirt costumes was performing a choreographed dance routine which also caught the eye of her one year old son, watching from his cot. He seemed transfixed with curiosity and the pictures helped him settle down. The performance prompted reminiscent reflections from Mrs Ankrah:

When I was growing up in Ghana, I took such things (performances) for granted. They were commonplace and I usually ignored them. After living here for so long my attitude changed and I began to treasure them as I found them more exciting. When we went back home for holidays, I could not get enough of them. I was like a tourist in my own country, enjoying every minute of such performances. Now I watch them on TV with renewed interest. Even my baby likes them too. You can see how attentive he is watching those dancers and the colours they are wearing.

This showed how parental viewing choices and preferences formed part of the ambience of the home environment in which their children's formative years were experienced. It was an early introduction of the child to features of his parents' cultural origins which made an impression on him. For many Ghanaian children born in London such exposure brought a visual familiarity with images of Africa before they ever set foot on their parents' homeland to more fully satisfy their curiosity and physically reconnect with their origins.

It is interesting that Mrs Ankrah felt like a tourist on visit to her homeland in her hankering after traditional cultural displays in the manner of the foreign tourists who regularly visited the country in search of an exotic experience, with their cameras at the ready to capture every image they could. In her case being abroad for so long had put her into a similar mood, to observe the performative aspects of her homeland culture with an outsider's eye and to appreciate what she took for granted in the past. This was a rediscovery and a reconnection with her origins which would revitalise her sense of identity to which new dimensions had been added in her sojourn abroad and therefore could not be the same as before.

¹ Date of visit: 22-7-2006

² Black Entertainment Network Television is said to be owned and run by Nigerian entrepreneurs.

³ Original Black Entertainment TV, owned by Ghanaians.

Mrs Ankrah's experiences may be considered typical of the older generation of Ghanaian-Londoners. The diasporic experience brings a new perspective from which there was now a greater appreciation of her homeland's cultural performances in contrast to when it was commonplace and part of everyday life when she was growing up in Ghana. This was also expressed in the reinstitution of traditional festivals and other rites among Ghanaians in London, ceremonies that they may have regarded with apathy and disinterest in the past but which now assumed greater significance away from the homeland.

Besides, reliving 'home' cultural experiences through television, as she does through niche African TV channels, provides an interesting example of the use of media to revisit cultural moments and experiences across time and space without travelling physically, enabling a merging of cultural experiences from different places and temporalities. The enthusiasm around the consumption of African programmes was similarly echoed in the other families:

Angela

My children enjoy the *Taxi Driver* (drama) episodes on OBE TV despite the repetitions. I like those programmes too. It takes me back and revives my memories of home. The scenery, the setting and the plots are all closer to home. It is comforting to re-experience something close to home. They are different though, not very refined, and sometimes they dwell too much on slow and detailed depiction of traditional beliefs and practices (Angela, 44 White Hart Lane Family).¹

Again the trans-generational feature of the consumption of African programmes is evident in this instance. Despite African films being different in style and quality from the usual fare on mainstream television and their apparent flaws, the children liked them. Moreover, the theme of reconnection with their African origins is revisited in these remarks. The physical and cultural environment they were born into back in their homeland, which they had bonded with, was always going to be part of them wherever they went in the world. This bond overrode and compensated for any lapses in quality or lack of refinement in the programmes. The criticism of quality was also comparative, linked to the sophisticated tastes acquired from their reception of a wide range of well financed, better produced, Western films and programmes, with comparatively better overall quality, to which the subjects had become accustomed

¹ Date of interview: 28-7-2006

and which now served as the standard by which Ghanaian/ African programmes were evaluated. This was one of the settings in which the disparities between the advanced West and the developing world were witnessed and the experience of living in the West also provided a different perspective from which to observe the contrasts. There was thus a mixed review of the African material as it fulfilled nostalgic feelings, entertained in a different way, but also showed the progression, or the lack of it, of African film production and how they compared with the standards set by the West.

The comparisons also extended to difference between Ghanaian and Nigerian productions, with the latter being adjudged by the subjects as superior. Respondent Mrs. Odoi, who regularly watched African drama, commented:

I like OBE TV because of the Ghanaian programmes there – films, music, African drama and documentaries. Coming from Africa myself, hearing the language on TV appeals to me. You get to see the African lifestyle and the way things are, especially in Ghana. You can also compare and contrast the drama and acting of now (today) to what it was like during our time (when we were back home). They have come a long way, but there is still room for improvement. At present the Nigerians are doing better than the Ghanaians. Their acting is more natural and believable
(Mrs Odoi, 43, Black Horse Road Family)¹

The demand for African programmes was driven by various desires. In this instance the appeal of the programmes derived from deep attachments to cultural elements such as African music (& dance), language, and the general way of life. Media technologies enabled them to fulfil the desire for such elements of the culture of their birth. The comments also indicate that consumption of such programmes takes account of the content as well as context of their production as a joint representation of Africa. Hence apart from the cultural content, there is commentary on the quality of the acting as a measure of African progression in the production of film drama over the course of time. This evaluation was done with a sense of patriotic identification with their African origins in general, and hence was less judgemental and more appreciative. Implicit in this is the consideration of African productions, among other processes in Africa as ‘developmental’, in a recall of the modernisation paradigm, and in comparisons with the West. Hence the comment: *they have come a long way, but there is still room for improvement.*

¹ Date interviewed: 14-1-2007

There is also a hint of ambivalence in the sense of detachment expressed in the use of ‘they’ instead of ‘we’, which appears to distinguish between the subjects’ diasporic identity and their counterparts in the homeland. One may not read too much into this as ‘they’ is commonly used in reference to their own children and other close relatives.

Some respondents were less enthusiastic in their appraisal, and had reason to be disappointed. Critical comments, already hinted at, were therefore not uncommon:

You get a flavour of the home life you miss by watching such programmes. But the dramas are often too long, some of the plots are too simple and the pace of events too slow. These days even the background music to the drama has changed with all these foreign tunes that often do not match the scenes depicted. I was watching a drama and the accompanying soundtrack was all ‘R’ & ‘B’ stuff, tunes that you identify more with Black America than with traditional African scenes. Not that I dislike R & B, but I select OBE because I want to experience something different, something more authentic, but everything is getting mixed up now
(Mr Boateng, aged 59, father of 3, *Enfield Family*)¹

While some were prepared to overlook such shortcomings others could not ignore them. The disappointment appeared to derive from the failure of expectations around personal preferences. As the respondent indicated, he was not averse to popular culture. He just disliked the mixing of forms, the hybridising trends that denied people like him a more wholesome or ‘authentic’ experience of African culture as he wanted it. The ‘authentic’ African experience sought through a portrayal that was faithful to an idyllic African culture as it was once known or imagined, unspoiled by the mixing-in of other cultures, was unattainable against the tide of the relentless spread of popular culture which was being reflected in African films. This draws attention to the global context (rather than an insulated African context) in which African drama was being produced and consumed. The influences filtered through into the films and were noticed by young people like Paul who observed that Ghanaian film drama tried to emulate foreign films:

We don’t really get to understand Ghanaian culture by watching OBE because in their drama they try to copy foreign films. (Paul, aged 18, Olive Grove family)²

Young viewers also expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of the programmes. At the *Olive Grove family home*¹ the teenage siblings expressed a preference for African

¹ Date of visit: 8-10-2006

² Date of interview: 2-10-2006

drama, but complained about programme repetitions and the long commercial interludes, oblivious to their financial significance to the television enterprise. The programmes were in English, but the occasional use of Ghanaian languages that they did not understand also interfered with their enjoyment of the drama and a fuller understanding of Ghanaian culture as depicted on screen:

Abena, aged 16:

...Most of the time they don't speak English and that's why some people don't understand what they're saying. Sometimes they don't put the subtitles on.

Paul aged 18:

Some of the stories are true, but the love stories are just silly.

Children in the *Walworth Family*² (all born in London) liked the Ghanaian films but were also critical of aspects of it:

Fred (aged 14):

I like them because they remind me about Ghana. The thing I don't like about them is that most of them are unrealistic.

Anita (aged 10):

I sometimes watch the Ghana films. They're OK, but sometimes they make the films too fake, like they just make the person disappear. Also when the person is hitting them, you can see that they're not really hitting them. Some of the acting is good, some not. Sometimes it's all repeats.

In Fred's case the sense of Ghanaian identity was a prime reason for liking Ghanaian programmes. His sister Anita sounded a bit more detached and less sentimental in her evaluation of Ghana films. But, like others, their appraisal included observations about lower standards of quality and sophistication in the narratives and presentation. The evaluation of things like the quality of the acting and general performances, coming from a ten year old, is remarkable and demonstrates the appreciable level of media reception competences, and how early they were acquired, arguably as a factor of the media-saturated environment in which they lived. Besides, like other subjects, their assessment of Ghanaian/ African films was also comparative given their familiarity with Hollywood standards of film production and quality.

Another dimension to the mediated re-experiencing of Ghanaian culture among the diasporans is hinted at in this extract:

¹ Date of interview: 2-10-06

² Date of interview: 8-10-06

I don't necessarily watch African drama out of nostalgia. For me homesickness does not play a part, and even if it does, it is a minor factor because *I visit Ghana often*.

(Kwapong, aged 51, accountant & father of 4, *Streatham Vale Family*)¹

This draws attention to the fact that in addition to visual travel by television as an imaginative way of revisiting the homeland and the consumption of Ghanaian programmes as a form of mediated experience, rapid mobility, which modern transportation affords, enables the subjects to close physical distance through direct visits to the homeland, the frequency of which makes it possible to virtually dwell in two places at once. The six and a half hours it takes to fly between London and Accra (Ghana), is less time than it takes to travel by rail or road from London to certain parts of the UK. Such possibilities bring a new dimension to the diasporic experience. Through regular physical and electronic contact with the homeland their sense of orientation to Ghanaian culture is regularly refreshed and renewed. They were living in Britain but they were abreast with the tempo, events, and life in the homeland in real time. They were in tune with the changing face and phases of a homeland in transition and they did not need to depend on romantic imaginations to fill any void in their recollection or reconstruction of 'home'. With second homes and business interests in Ghana, they may not stand out as returnees like their predecessors of previous decades who had spent time abroad and lost touch with the flow of everyday life 'back home'. They represent the kind of transnational commuting subject who is adept at switching cultural codes within and between different national and cultural environments and times. In this lies the potential for an accentuated articulation of overlapping or hybridised identities which living in-between worlds produces.

8.3: Didactic and social uses of African drama:

African programmes served more than mere nostalgic purposes. Some Ghanaian homes visited had collections of VHS and DVD recordings of African film drama, especially Nigerian films, stacked in the living room. Such home collections of African drama indicated the degree of interest in, and demand for such products considering that each DVD cost no less than £10, not to mention competition from the vast array of TV programmes available on satellite and terrestrial channels, and the limited disposable viewing time available due to work commitments and social

¹ Date of interview: 9-1-2007

engagements. Regular viewers conceded that the Nigerian films¹ were better produced than the Ghanaians ones.

At the *Black Horse Road Family* home, where they had a considerable collection of African films, mother Mrs Odoi, sometimes set time aside to watch these with friends, who came over, usually at weekends. She thought the quality of such films had improved but there was still room for further improvement.

On Sundays my friends come around and we watch selections from my collection of DVD's and we talk about it. I prefer the love stories and Christian morality tales, but I don't like ghost stories, black magic and that kind of thing. But there are people who still believe in such things. I know people (here in London) who send money home for soothsayers and fortune-tellers to tell them things about their lives and futures. They let their relatives in Ghana consult clairvoyants, or traditional priests on their behalf, believing that their fortunes would be turned around for the better
(Mrs Odoi, 43, nurse – Black Horse Road Family)²

This was a pattern of viewing that was replicated elsewhere and corroborated by other respondents including younger viewers like 14 year old girl Dela³:

Some of the videos are lent to us or are bought by us. We watch most of the time especially when we go on holiday. I watch with my mum and dad and sometimes visitors and we discuss the story as we watch it. Some people say that in such programmes they are always doing juju, always eating fufu.

As seen in these instances, the viewing of African video films often took place in a group setting, and sometimes took the form of a viewing ritual with special time set aside for it. Unlike the televised versions, they had the freedom of choice and there was a variety of stories to choose from, and repeat-viewing if required. The long viewing hours were sometimes simultaneously used for hair styling (plaiting or weaving), or eating together. Thus viewing took place in a social context amidst chats and volunteered commentaries and interpretations of scenes in the drama, all of which to some extent recaptured the atmosphere of similar gatherings back in their homeland where group viewing of television or video was common and people enjoyed watching with others rather than watching alone, and those who could not afford them were not left out. In the act of viewing, therefore, a piece of 'home' was recreated both in ambience and through the content of the film.

¹ This also reflected the growing prominence of the Nigerian film industry, which has earned it the tag *Nollywood*, a derivative of *Hollywood*, a sign of its increasing international recognition.

² Date on interview: 14-1-2007

³ Interviewed along with her mates in Notting Hill Gate, West London on 8-1-2007

For young people, watching African drama had another function. It introduced them to their parents' cultural origins and provided something different from the regular children's programmes on mainstream television. This extract summarises the sources and types of drama watched, and the circumstances of their procurement:

On the OBE channel, I watch *Fresh Act*, *Superstory* (Nigerian drama), and anything that comes on. *Superstory* sometimes has (moral) lessons and is funny also. *Fresh Act* is like a bit of a copy of western programmes. Apart from drama on OBE we have lots of films on videos and DVD's from a long time ago. My dad usually buys them. He usually goes to Ghana for business and when he is coming back to London my mum tells him what to buy. (Nicola, girl aged 14)¹

This was more or less typical for many young viewers. They viewed what their parents procured in addition to watching the TV episodes on African channels like OBE TV. A participant in a young people's group discussion² explained that they sometimes depended on such programmes to learn about aspects of contemporary Ghanaian youth life:

On the OBE channel, I watch dramas like '*Fresh Trouble*', '*Taxi Driver*', Hip-life music and others programmes which I find interesting. Watching Ghanaian programmes enables you to relate to your people back home. If you miss Ghana you just watch OBE and it will remind you of Ghana. I find the episodes of *Fresh Trouble* funny. It portrays life in the ghetto areas of Ghana which since we are in this country we don't really get to see. So episodes like *Fresh Trouble* make you aware of what's going on over there (Nigella, girl, aged 19)

For others they enabled a re-living of Ghanaian life and trips to memory lane:

It's interesting because you actually live that life, because when you go to Ghana on holidays you're actually living that life. When you watch such films you go 'oh yeah my house is as big as that ... I remember when I did this and that' and blah blah. This is the lifestyle that people live in Ghana and stuff like that. It also shows the poor parts as well, how people live there. We should be grateful for where we are and stuff like that. (Ama, female student, aged 19)³

It is interesting that they were quite happy to see poor, unglamorous ghetto areas shown in the African films whereas they felt denigrated and disempowered by Western media depictions of African deprivation. But there is a difference. There is a sense in which they received such programmes as 'their own' rather than someone else's description of them as they were made by fellow Africans for Africans. These

¹ White Hart Lane Family, date interviewed: 7-10-2007

² Group interview at Notting Hill Gate on 8-1-2007

³ Group interview recorded at Woodgreen. Date:7-1-2007

film portrayals of the African scene were as close to real life as they could be for some subjects to derive a sense of contemporary life in the homeland, as these extracts suggest. They were not as deliberately selective as Western depictions, and were balanced, showing both wealthy areas and poor places, the environment as it was. To the subjects this was a truer face of their homeland, warts and all, with its rich and poor, and those in the middle of the social strata; ostentation juxtaposed with poverty, elements around which many social narratives develop in societies around the world, unlike foreign representations that consigned the entirety of Africanness to squalor and degradation. The viewers could therefore relate to them on one level as probable human interest stories featuring the good, the bad, and the not so beautiful, and on the other, there was a semblance of an authentic depiction of Africanness that they could identify with, which they witnessed or sometimes experienced while on holiday in Ghana.

But not everyone was enthused by African drama involving ghost or black magic stories. Those who disliked the supernatural genre and were infrequent viewers as a result, were probably unaware of the other themes that were also addressed in stories, and so they were dismissive of African drama in general. But their objection to the genre could be for aesthetic and other reasons too. Mrs Boateng of the *Enfield Family* was one of those who were not impressed by the kind of African drama that they saw:

When you watch OBE TV and those things, their programmes are all monotonous. It's always the same things: witches, juju-men and things like that. In an episode that I watched, a woman was pregnant, but by daybreak the foetus in her womb had been transferred to her husband's stomach. So now it was the husband who became pregnant and the wife's pregnancy had disappeared. Things like this are impossible; it wouldn't happen in real life. But they feel this is worth showing on TV.

Question: How did that story end?

Mrs Boateng:

Do they ever finish those stories? They end the story abruptly and do not provide any further information about a concluding episode, or even mention it. They do it here¹ too sometimes, but it's worse with the African programmes. They discontinue a particular story or drama that you are following and that is it. We are not making progress. By now they should have improved everything. (Mrs Boateng aged 50, mother of three – Enfield Family)²

¹ A reference to other satellite TV channels which sometimes abruptly discontinued a series and failed to provide follow-up information on programmes, unlike the BBC and ITV presentations which kept viewers adequately informed about programmes and their sequels and schedules.

² Date interviewed: 8-10-2006

There is obvious dissatisfaction with the disconnection and remoteness of the ‘faceless’ service providers on niche channels. The critique is also of content (the fantasy theme) as well as presentation (poor programme delivery service) which was also a criticism of the service providers, in this case the OBE TV channel seen as a Ghanaian TV station. In both respects the African performance was adjudged to be wanting, and many shared this view, some more forgiving than others. With access to mainstream and various other channels, they not only had other viewing options, but other standards to compare African drama with, oblivious of the shoestring budgets and the financial constraints of small media operators running niche channels like OBE TV¹. While the subjects identified with African productions as ‘their own’ and some, like Mrs. Boateng, lamented that *‘we are not making progress ... by now they should have improved everything’* – expressing a sense of shared ownership, such African media operations were primarily business enterprises with a commercial rather than a community ethos. Ghanaian viewers were therefore considered as part of a wider target audience needed to sustain profitability of the operations².

Father of three Abankwah who had lived in the Britain for a considerable period of time admitted that he was not a regular viewer of African drama and was quite scathing about the supernatural themes:

I have a problem with a lot of the drama that is being produced by the African production companies, where it’s always about witchcraft, juju man etc. Such things I find really backward. As I got older I formed some very strong views about some of the things I see as affecting our development back home. Personally I think we spend too much time focussing on supernatural and spiritual things to the detriment of our progress and development. So when I see a programme on OBE with the opportunity to influence Ghanaians in the diaspora showing all that supernatural stuff, from my point of view it’s a negative programme because instead of dwelling too much on these supernatural things they should dwell on how technology can help us to go forward, focussing on things that can be explained rather than things that people imagine. So I’m not suggesting that they shouldn’t make programmes that they think people are happy to watch. I just feel that those things are not helping our development. When I see those types of programmes I just reach

¹ Production and running costs were said to be huge and revenue from advertising was low, hence the dependence on cheaper programmes and on programme repetitions to fill air-time. This emerged in an interview with a representative of the Original Black Entertainment TV (OBE TV) at their studios in West London.

² In an interview with OBE TV staff, it emerged that they strategically broadened the scope of their offerings in order to attract a wider audience to enhance the prospects for profitability rather than narrow their focus to Ghanaian-specific programmes. A similar strategy was noted with Ghanaian churches that did not want to be narrowly defined in ethnic terms and sought to attract multinational congregants.

for the remote control and switch to something else. They dwell too much on the past, ancestors and all that. It's important for historical reasons. But where people's lives are concerned ... it's a waste of most of their productive time. (Abankwa, aged 57, lawyer & politician)¹

As explained elsewhere in this thesis, there were instances in which 'African' was sometimes conflated with 'Ghanaian' and expressed through the use of 'we' to include Ghanaians abroad. In such cases, the descriptions and attributes were applicable to both identity categories. This appeared to be one such instance, and it involved similarities in cultures and drama production, and the cross-consumption of African films by Ghanaians. So while primarily the critique was aimed at Ghanaians, it was applicable to other Africans as a whole.

The reference to '*our development*' connotes a sense of belonging together and of facing the challenge of 'development' together. This idea of 'development' is a derivative of the modernisation paradigm with its linear view of progress and with the advanced Western economies setting the standards to aspire to. Living in the West as they did, subjects like Abankwah were acutely aware of the disparities in economies and living standards between the West and their homeland, and from that comparative position he expresses a sense of frustration that any opportunities that media technologies offered for progress had been misappropriated for 'unproductive' programmes and their ready consumption by equally culpable audiences fixated with magic as a cultural proclivity. This minority view smacked elitist and high-minded but it reflected the perspective of those who had bought into the progressivist assumptions of modernisation which denigrated all things traditional.

Moreover, Abankwah appears to attribute false consciousness to audiences of such fare, implying that they were undiscerning in their consumption. This recalls the perspective of the Frankfurt School which critiqued the Culture Industries and attributed false consciousness to their mass audiences.² In the case of the critical subjects, whether this standpoint was due to their sojourn abroad was open to speculation as similar views were held by some Ghanaians in the homeland. In any

¹ Date Interviewed: 3-2-2007. Crystal Palace, South West London

² Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer (1944) *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
[www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm]
The Frankfurt School was also associated with Critical Theory

case, as pointed out previously, the media operators were not driven by ‘development’ objectives and any such outcomes would be incidental to their primary commercial goals.

Another respondent often criticised some types of African drama for being too simplistic and offering unrealistic solutions to life’s challenges, and she disparaged certain beliefs upon which some stories were based:

In Ghana every old woman with wrinkles is suspected of witchcraft. It’s always women who are suspected, never men. They drive under the influence of alcohol or use mobile phones while driving and then when there is an accident they blame a poor old woman somewhere for causing it through witchcraft (Auntie Dei, aged 60, Civil servant & grandmother).¹

It is quite common for Ghanaians both in the homeland and abroad to poke fun at some of their own African beliefs and related practices. Kwabena, a 42 year old Ghanaian acquaintance once joked:

The African was not born to die. When a white person dies they talk about the medical condition that caused the death. So they ask about what killed him. But when a black person dies they ask ‘who killed him’. People never die of natural causes. Juju or witchcraft has to be involved. As if the black man was never meant to die.

Such light-hearted self-deprecatory humour questioned the tendency by some to attribute supernatural causes to natural events. It was against this critical background that African drama was received. But the audiences were not as gullible as the likes of Abankwa thought.

But a more positive evaluation of African drama came from regular viewers who derived pleasure as well as moral lessons from them. A respondent explained her interest in Ghanaian and Nigerian films as follows:

Usually it’s more about the theme. African films always have a moral lesson. Maybe it’s because I’m biased. You could watch some English film and find it predictable, or be none the wiser at the end of it. But African films, apart from the Nigerian ones that usually feature much juju, always have a moral lesson for you at the end (Ardee, 51, nurse and mother)².

These views were echoed by other respondents:

I often watch African drama which I would compare to Coronation Street and EastEnders. The themes are quite good and they carry moral lessons. Recently

¹ Date interviewed: 26-12-2006

² Interviewed: 6-12-2006

I watched one about a family feuding over inheritance. They teach us about human greed, covetousness and other vices and their consequences. You grasp the African mentality; why Africans are the way they (we) are.
(Kwapong, 51, Accountant, Father, Streatham Vale Family)¹

The term 'African films' as used by the respondents, although it suggests a broad coverage for films from various parts of Africa, actually refers mainly to Ghanaian and Nigerian films which form the bulk of African films that are watched by Ghanaians. Such films have much in common and Ardee's suggestion that Nigerian films feature a lot of 'juju' or black magic, applies to Ghanaian films which also include supernatural elements, but to a lesser degree.

Incidentally, British-born young people did not find such stories deprecatory or backward as Abankwa suggested, though some children were occasionally frightened by them. Some, like Paul from the *Olive Grove Family*, saw them as fantasy, and suggested that such bits were meant to spice up the stories and make them more interesting and that it was not like that in everyday life. They also found them interesting for their novelty; they were different from the usual fare on mainstream British TV, as one London-born respondent explained:

For me it's a bit different when it comes to Ghanaian plays because I'm watching them almost for a different reason because you don't get those programmes. To me it's because I don't get that kind of television, it is still interesting to watch it and I would watch that over EastEnders or Coronation Street or anything. So it's almost like nostalgia about them. So I'm not scrutinizing them as much as I would if I was watching EastEnders. I just like it for the fact that I'm watching Ghanaians. So I have got a bias there already. If I was watching them all the time then maybe I will start to pick holes and be critical. What I tend to find is that all the stories tend to have this general theme which is about good versus evil and good coming to win at the end of it more or less. So that seems to be the overriding thing.
(Kwaale, 37, manager)²

Younger viewers also picked up on the moral values within Africa drama: '*In African drama, they teach you moral lessons about things like trust*' Janice (girl aged 16)³. This transmission became more obvious during a visit to the *Streatham Hill Family*⁴ where they viewed an episode of Ghanaian drama entitled '*Forbidden Fruit*' themed around infidelity and intrigue. The adult theme caused some unease for their mother

¹ Date interviewed: 9-1-2007

² Date interviewed: 12-12-2006

³ Group interview, Woodgreen, date: 7-1-2007

⁴ Date: 31-08-06).

as the children were paying close attention. From their comments the children showed a grasp of the adult issues dealt with in the story, and expressed their own opinions on aspects of the episode. At the end of the drama, 12 year old Naadu summed up her take on the moral of the story:

Be happy with what you've got because you never know what would come to you, like the man who was married but chose to go after his boss' wife and got killed by her in the end.

African drama is didactic. The moral lessons were pivotal to the meaning of the stories and these lessons were not lost on viewers. In such episodes it was understood that actions had consequences. In this particular case contentment with what you have and faithfulness to your spouse were recommended but infidelity was shown to be costly. The uncomplicated representations of good and evil, made moral lessons readily digestible. Often the natural desire of the viewer for justice was vicariously fulfilled when an obnoxious character in a drama was punished, or when the good character was eventually rewarded. African drama therefore introduced the younger generation of British-born Ghanaians to African worldviews and moral values which augmented or served as alternatives to other values and worldviews that they may be exposed to in Western society.

8.4: The Supernatural element: Art imitating life?

Belief in the supernatural is common to all cultural systems around the world. It is a theme that is often touched on in African drama as part of the general portrayal of African culture. While older Ghanaians were familiar with many of such beliefs and associated practices, British-born young Ghanaians were introduced to them through the film portrayals. It is noticeable that African films do not come in the distinct genre categories of Western films such as tragedy, comedy, fantasy, children's adventures, period drama, detective series, and science fiction, among others. In the absence of genre specificity the merged themes give rise to the perception that African films are about ghosts and magic, a perception that got through to young children as well. In a chat about such films, mother of three, Adjoa, light-heartedly mentioned that whenever her young daughter (aged about three) saw African drama on TV she would ask "mummy, is it a *sisa* (ghost) film". Perhaps the conflated view of African films with magic is due to this lack of genre distinction.

The element of fear mixed with fascination was a potent draw for African drama, and young respondents provided some interesting insights into what they thought of the African beliefs portrayed and how they related to them, and whether they incorporated such beliefs into their own world view. In a group interview¹ they expressed various opinions on the issue of the perceived potency or otherwise of African beliefs – the relationship between art and life. They were all born and raised in Britain and had understood how such things worked mainly through screen depictions:

Ama (girl, student, aged 19):

Ghanaians, you don't know how they are. They could be your friends in the morning and in the night they could be going to do you juju and stuff like that. You see all this stuff on the films and obviously they have some basis in true stories so that's what scares me when I go to Ghana. I think that witchcraft is real. If God is real then that is real as well. Good and evil, there's a balance.

Janice, schoolgirl aged 16: I don't believe in it (magic).

Amele, schoolgirl aged 16:

I do. If you go to church you see all these people being delivered and you see all the evil spirits coming out (a reference to exorcisms performed in some charismatic churches)

Albert, schoolboy, aged 15:

I believe that there is something in juju and witchcraft, but if you believe in God then you have nothing to worry about.

Their views reflected the different modes of belief that they had acquired from their observations, hearsay, and experiences, a significant aspect of which was mediated, as is evident from comments like *'you see all this stuff on the films and obviously they have some basis in true stories'* (Ama). This was also the view from a separate interview in which another teenager when asked about her interest in news about Ghana replied:

No, except one or two that I heard about. It was about witches doing things to people. That was scary. I believe it is true because coming from the video and movies (Ghanaian and African videos) that I watch as well, there are still people who go to the juju people and that stuff (Dela, girl aged 14)².

This established that African videos influenced the beliefs of the British-born generation and also shows the influence of mediation in general on their worldview. Without much of first-hand experience of the African environment, many young people born in England believed that the films reflected reality; that art was imitating

¹ Date of Interview: 7-1-2007 @ Woodgreen in North London

² Extract from the Notting Hill Gate group interview recorded on 8-1-2007

life, and incorporated such beliefs into their worldview. Screen drama therefore played a part in transmitting beliefs to a younger generation far away from the theatres of production or from direct experience. An adult respondent from that generation, British born Kwaaley, also provided another dimension to the take of the second generation on the metaphysical significance of African magic videos.

Question:

When you watch African dramas which feature black magic, juju and all that, do you think there's anything in them?

Kwaaley:

This is an interesting question. The Western part of me would instinctively say it's not true, and there's no such thing. But the other part of me that tries to keep an open mind would say you never know. Some of them I directly don't have time for like when they go to get some love potion to make someone fall in love with them and that kind of stuff. I don't accept that. When you see people getting sucked into bottles and all this kind of thing - that I find it hard to deal with. (Kwaaley, manager, London-born, aged 38)¹

This would suggest that some of them, at least, bring a Western outlook to the consumption of African drama compared to viewers born and bred in the African environment, but the same may be said of their parents who may have become westernised in outlook. Kwaaley (quoted above) suggests that the western part of her make-up was the sceptical part, but that there was another part of her that accepted the possibility that supernatural phenomena might be real, although she found the fantasy element sometimes incredulously overstretched. This dichotomisation of her belief system on the supposition that the Western part of her make-up was the sceptical part is simplistic and derives from a popular misperception that assumes that westernisation is synonymous with scepticism or the extinction of belief. Attention may be drawn to persisting Western superstitions around things like breaking mirrors, unlucky number thirteen, walking under a ladder, among others, as well as beliefs in fairies and witchcraft popularised in films such as the Harry Potter series. Belief in the paranormal is also widespread and is regular fare on British TV, especially on satellite TV channels². Moreover, religion continues to play a role in shaping political

¹ Date interviewed: 12-12-2006

² These include *Ghosthunting*, *Psychic Private Eyes* and *Psychic Interactive* featuring real-life psychic encounters and consultations with clairvoyants by ordinary people and celebrities looking for spiritual guidance in their lives or wanting to contact dead relatives. Paranormal activities are featured on mainstream channels such as ITV and more regularly on niche channels such as Zone Reality, Zone Thriller and Living TV, ITV 2 on Sky TV. Programmes featured include *Living with the dead*, *Ghost Stories*, *Psychic Interactive*, and *Psychic Private Eyes*. Media reports also indicate numerous instances of Police departments in the US, UK, and elsewhere using the services of psychics (clairvoyants) to solve missing persons cases and unsolved murders.

ideologies, alliances, institutional practices, public policy, communities of interest, ways of life and social identities in western liberal democracies such as Britain and the United States, despite the challenge from the forces of secularism and humanistic philosophy. The reality is therefore of a mosaic of beliefs across all cultures. This is depicted in certain film genres from various parts of the world.

But beliefs come in cultural garbs and African beliefs as depicted in the films, come cloaked in symbolism, ritual, mystery, black magic, fear and danger, and with exotic paraphernalia such as oxtail wisps, amulets, cowry shells, and talismans. African films project a worldview of a cosmic conflict between good and evil which is also experiential in social relationships. The mixed reception and reviews they get among Ghanaians in London is indicative of differences in tastes and preferences. Some viewed the films as fantasy intended to draw the interest of audiences, while others were more critical and regarded them as outmoded and backward, which indicated that they regarded them more as depictions of an aspect of African culture that they took a dim view of, rather than an art form comparable to films from the fantasy/horror film genre of Western, Arabian, Indian, or Chinese traditions which also included magic, sorcery or witchcraft. *The Harry Potter* series, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* may be cited as examples in a long list of Western films in this genre, not to mention the blood-sucking vampire *Dracula* series among others, which dwell on dark themes and exploit popular fears, beliefs, and dark imaginations. But these were not considered by the critics on the same terms as the black magic themes of African drama, nor was it suggested that they represented art imitating life in the West.

African programmes were therefore viewed by Ghanaians from various perspectives. These included a critical, elitist, socio-political perspective that suggested that media space occupied by African drama was tantamount to a displacement of opportunities to utilise media for development purposes, as implied in the remarks of Abankwa. Such arguments draw on concepts associated with modernisation and utilise notions of media as instruments for development. It is implied in the arguments (here) that African magic drama colonises Ghanaian viewing schedules at the expense of programmes with 'development' objectives or themes. This myopic view fails to substantiate the implied suggestion of a retrogressive role of African magic drama in

the context of aspirations for Ghana's progress. It glaringly fails to apply an obvious comparative frame involving magic and fantasy films from the developed Western world where the popularity of the horror/ fantasy film genre is not considered retrogressive, or linked to issues of progress, or as a colonisation of viewing space for 'development', which is the crux of the argument against supernatural stories in African films. It may be argued that this self-critical perspective on perceived African backwardness issues from sedimentation of imbibed othering ideological discourses, predicated on the contrasts between Western advancement and African inertia or lack of progress. Dwelling in a Western cultural setting probably accentuates this view and the desire to catch up with the West.

8.5: Summary and Conclusions:

- ***Proliferation of African programmes:*** Ghanaian viewers in London had few opportunities to see features of Ghana on mainstream British TV as these were rare and fleeting, and were usually made from western perspectives that did not fulfil their desires and expectations. However, the availability of African programmes in Britain has seen an exponential increase in volume with the technological innovations in video film-making and digitalisation, and the emergence into prominence on the world stage of the Nigerian film industry, supplemented by films from smaller Ghanaian and other sources. These new regional sources sustained a regular flow of African programmes to UK-based viewers in video format and on niche satellite British TV channels. Produced by Africans from African perspectives, they meet a demand for 'home' cultural productions among Ghanaian audiences in London. In the context of seeming global cultural synchronisation, such mediated revisiting of cultures of place of origin could be considered as a form of recuperation of ancestral cultures with the potential for preserving some of the world's cultural diversity.
- ***Some uses of African programmes:*** African programmes proved to be popular among the subjects for their entertainment value, as a remedy for nostalgia, and the fact that they provided something different from other films and TV programmes. They were useful as a cultural resource enabling the homeland-born generation to reconnect with their origins and to relive African culture through its

re-enactment on screen replete with the African landscape, scenery, language, beliefs, music and dance. The programmes also served as a means for the British-born generation of Ghanaians of observing their parents' culture at source in the African environment. Ultimately, such programmes provided resources for recovering and renewing a sense of identity, not just in the older nostalgic generation, but also with a younger generation who through African drama and music, connected with the parental culture as another resource for their own complex identity.

- ***Cultures and identities in flux:*** African programmes enabled young Ghanaians to observe Ghanaian culture in the homeland in juxtapositions: rural and urban, rich and poor, traditional and modern, apart from ethnic dialects mixed with English language and subtitled, and African music and dance. This synthesis of temporalities, contrasts, and cultural forms in the African setting reflected and added to the context of cultural flux in which the identities of the Ghanaian viewers in Britain were being reformed and renewed.
- ***Transmission of moral values:*** Many of the subjects liked African films for the moral lessons they carried and the unambiguous triumph of good over evil which provided vicarious pleasure in a world where injustice was part of life and bad things sometimes happened to good people, and happy endings were not always guaranteed. Fundamental to the morality tales is the belief in reward for virtue and punishment of vice with no grey areas in-between. Like the fireside evening storytelling that preceded the advent of television in Ghana (Africa), they highlight the rewards of moral propriety in human relationships and the consequences of immoral conduct, providing a clear and unambiguous distinction between good and evil, unlike the fudged messages emanating from contemporary philosophies of moral relativism. This added a dimension to the sophistication required in negotiating the complexity of moral judgements and choices in a pluralistic environment and its demands of political correctness.
- ***Critique:*** Ghanaian viewers critiqued the programme delivery service in respect of the niche OBE TV channel seen as a Ghanaian TV station, and of the supernatural content of African drama. Their criticism emanated from a sense of identification

with such African productions as one of their own, and hence the frustration at the lack of progress towards their aspirations for the standards of quality which they had become accustomed to, from their regular consumption of Western media products, particularly from Hollywood, as a consequence of which they had acquired a comparative frame of mind based on those standards without appreciating the financial constraints within which the niche smaller African operations were conducted.

- ***Shifting worldviews and identities:*** African drama also projected a worldview of a cosmic conflict between the forces of good and evil played out in human affairs where the intervention of supernatural forces could be solicited against threats from nature or for assistance in social matters. This involved the portrayal of beliefs in the supernatural (black magic as well as the providential role of ancestral spirits in society), which informed the worldview of young viewers, some of whom viewed it as fantasy, but met with critical attitudes among the older generation for reasons of personal taste. But the critique may also stem from a desire for a sanitised portrayal of African culture to reflect aspirations for their homeland commensurate with their updated perceptions of the world, which, like their mobile identities, was subject to change with new experiences and information. And in the information-rich environment of their sojourn, where different worldviews vied for space and influence, such tendencies and dynamic processes gained impetus.
- ***African drama and modernisation:*** Another feature of the critical review of African drama involving magic, by Ghanaians abroad, was the elitist, socio-political perspective that suggested that media space occupied by such African drama was tantamount to misappropriation of media opportunities that could be utilised for 'development' purposes. By implication, this derogatory view attributed a form of mass false consciousness to producers and viewers of African drama of the supernatural kind, whereas the evidence suggested otherwise. Significantly this retrogressive view was not applied to fantasy and horror films from the already developed West, a genre to which African magic films belong. This reveals the flaw in this derivative of the modernisation paradigm. Although a

minority opinion, it reflects the different perspectives that Ghanaians bring to the reception and review of programmes produced by Africans.

CHAPTER NINE

NEWSWATCH

Chapter outline

- 9.0: General introduction (news values & ideologies, & news as a construct)
- 9.1: Significance of news & channels of reception
- 9.2: Some significant local and global news events of the period (2005-2007)
- 9.3: News, a sense of geography, and the world as one:
- 9.4: Reactions to news of natural disasters (non-moral evil)
- 9.5: Fall-outs of terrorism - aftermath of 7/7 (moral evil)
- 9.6: A Diet of Bad News:
- 9.7: News talk:
- 9.8: Ghana (& Africa) on the News
- 9.9: Summary and Conclusions

9.0: General introduction:

News provides a continuous flow of accounts of ‘significant’ *events* from around the world and from the local area. It is a rich source of current *information and education*, providing topics for conversation and aiding *socialisation*. It also enables *comparative cultural evaluations* to be made as knowledge of differences in the social, economic and political conditions and living circumstances of various groups and societies becomes available. News reception also provides a context in which *self and collective identities* are formed, activated or (re)imagined. Gillespie (1995) observed how through collective processes of TV news reception, political and cultural values are discussed, collective identities are negotiated and aspirations towards cultural change expressed.

News is produced from *ideological* structures. Van Dijk (1988) explains how newsmakers operate within the prevailing professional ideology about the nature of news and routinely apply evaluation criteria or news values in the processing of source information; values which reflect the class, gender, and ethnic position of the journalists and are known and shared by the public, such as negativity, proximity (ideological and local), privileged reference to elite nations, elite institutions and elite individuals as news actors. Although journalists may sometimes disagree with the

actions or opinions of those in power, news production routines legitimate the power of these agencies by providing regular media access and representing their perspectives and ideology in news reports. Such values¹ play an important role in the reproduction of socioeconomic and political power (including racism and ethnicism) (Van Dijk, 1988: 155-6).

The reality of TV news, like all ‘reality’ on TV, is **constructed**. Fiske and Hartley argue that realism is an artificial construct corresponding to the way the world is perceived and is experienced through the mediating structures of language. Language produces what is termed ‘real-seemingness’ where the *signs* for reality become the real thing; the representation is taken as the actual (Fiske and Hartley, 1996: 129). In other words, mind-originated conventions of realism ‘naturalise’ the way the world is apprehended.² The ideological framework of established norms of representing reality, it is argued, is covert and has the potential to place audiences in a ‘subjectified’ consumer role, which subordinates them to the perspectives of the dominant middle classes who control TV production.

This chapter examines television news reception and processing among Ghanaian Londoners. It explores the importance of news for their understanding of the world

¹ Other **criteria of newsworthiness** include *Novelty, Recency, Presupposition, Consonance, Relevance, and Deviance* (Van Dijk, 1988b: 121) Relevance is determined by the interests of large groups whose lives are affected by events and decisions (laws, regulations etc), but also by large or powerful groups and by those who control the social system. There may be large domains of information of high relevance to the public, but which may not be covered if they threaten the interests of those in power, who as sources, will not release relevant information (Van Dijk, 1988b: 122).

Furthermore, the news is structured according to professional schemas involving semantic variations. **Ideologically-based lexical choices** in the news media may inflect the news with the implied and associated values incorporated in shared word-meanings. Thus the same person may be described as a ‘terrorist’ instead of ‘freedom fighter’ and what may be described as ‘tough’ or ‘strong’ action may be ‘aggressive’ or ‘offensive’ for others. Similarly, ‘riots’ may be used instead of ‘disturbances’, or ‘hooligans’ instead of ‘demonstrators’ Such lexical choices and descriptions often reveal hidden points of view, tacit opinions or ideologies (Van Dijk, 1988b: 81-82, 177).

Headlines, like news selection in general, have ideological implications. They focus on selected news events and epitomise the agenda-setting role of the media, directing the focus of audiences – not necessarily what to think, but what to think about. Headlines are also used to effect, and are designed to engage the attention of the viewer. They subjectively define the most prominent or most relevant information of the news item. It is suggested that they are often the only information memorised and so play an important role in information processing and possible effects of news about ethnic minorities (Van Dijk, 1988: 188-9).

² **Language** as a means of grasping the world is also the capacity, or competence which can be drawn upon to produce a particular performance; the power that allows people to produce the natural. Likewise, TV pictures are signs and signals which represent the 3-dimensional physical world on a uni-dimensional screen as if it was the real thing.

and their place in it, and the impact of news-induced awareness of threats from diseases, conflicts, terrorism, disasters, and crime on their sense of self and other identities.

9.1: Significance of news & channels of reception:

News was regularly available to the subjects from a multiplicity of sources which kept them abreast with events. These included BBC channels (such as BBC 1, BBC News 24), ITV News, Channel 4 News, 5 News, Sky News channels, CNN, Al-Jazeera (English), Internet sources including Ghanaweb.com, Digital channels, and others.¹ Access to the major news channels made viewers part of a wider audience focussed on, and digesting the same news issues as presented by newsmakers at any particular time. Van Dijk (1988b: 107), argues that shared partial understanding obtained for public discourse allows large groups of people to have similar models of the same situations which may be re-used as input for the communication about new events. In sharing the same sources of news and engaging with the same discourses, they shared similar frames of understanding and models of the nature of reality with other audiences, constructed from the ideological positions and structures of newsmakers, which produce a particular worldview. That notwithstanding, opinions on events were subject to variation.

The common experience of immersion in a media saturated environment and the prominence of TV news in producing a sense of reality is described by one respondent:

When I turn on the TV it presents the same news I heard on the radio. Usually you find lots of free newspapers on the London trains which I also read. But everything I see in the papers, I have already seen on TV and heard on the radio. So I see that they are all about the same things (events). But TV brings you pictures, unlike radio where you listen and imagine, or newspapers where you read. TV is what helps you see how things happen. With newspapers they may exaggerate things or write things that may not be true. But with TV you can see the pictures for yourself so it's not necessary for someone to tell you something that is untrue (Mrs Quayle, grandmother aged 68)²

This was more or less a typical experience of the subjects from which it may be inferred that:

- News consumption was a regular ritual in their everyday lives.

¹ Source: Interviewees / informants and observation.

² Date Interviewed: 15-12-06

- News was readily available on various channels but despite the multiplicity of outlets the news items featured were similar across the channels. They all tended to feature roughly similar headline stories.
- TV news pictures gave viewers a sense of the reality of the events being described. They could see it for themselves, or so it seemed. Pictures affirmed the reports and made the news appear more authoritative.¹
- Most of the subjects considered the news as a source of factual and reliable information about current events in the world and in their local area. A common expression was '*I watch the news to know what's going on*'

Other purposes served by the news in the lives of respondents are indicated in these samples:

You get to know what is happening around you. It's good to know because ignorance is not an excuse. News about the threat of recession, the drop in house prices, interest rate cuts by Bank of England, are all important to me. We've got a mortgage on our property.
(Frank, Accounts Clerk, aged 32 Date interviewed: 10-2-2007)

Mr. Kwapong

I'm interested in news about Ghana because I go there every year and I want to know what's going on. I've got projects there so I need to be up-to-date about everything – political, economic, you name it. I also follow world news. Some issues are not really important to me, others I'm interested in, like financial news, especially interest rates because of my mortgage repayments.
(Kwapong, aged 55, Accountant Streatham Vale Family. (D.O.I: 9-1-2007)

News was a source of information about their locality and the wider world beyond their horizon. This involved an implicit recognition that the local and the global were intertwined. 'Widening of one's horizons' as Mamley² attributed to news, involved broader knowledge frames and the news was a resource for such competency. It had practical implications and influenced everyday life decisions. As indicated by respondents, it informed their actions, opinions, attitudes, decisions, financial arrangements, and world view.

Young Ghanaians had typical young people's attitudes to the news. Previous research established that consumption of TV news is an age-specific activity as much as it is a class or gender-specific activity (Morley, 1986; Gillespie, 1995). News is a typical adult genre and when it was on, in instances in this study, adults did not usually give

¹ The news was still subject to editorial prerogatives and other considerations of producers

² Girl aged 17, Group interview, Date: 9-2-2007 @ Turnpike Lane, North London

in to children's preferences like they did over other programmes. As this study confirms, for many young people, watching the news was incidental rather than by choice, often because their parents or some other person was watching it and they (children) watched alongside. Schoolgirl Nicola provides a typical response:

I watch the news if my mum is watching it or tells me to change it to the news channel. (Nicola, aged 15 of the *White Hart Lane Family*)¹

For others it was lower down the order of viewing priorities:

When there is nothing to watch early in the morning, sometimes I watch the news. (Fred aged 15 from the *Walworth Family*)²

Children also had certain general impressions about news, as reflections from children from the *Streatham Hill Family* indicated:³

Naadu (aged 12):

On the news, they say what happens in the world, basically. When things like earthquakes happen sometimes they show it. Sometimes they talk about how people are suffering in Africa and how they are always thinking about Africa.

Sam (aged 6):

I don't like the news because it is about people dying and in the news they shoot aeroplanes and they crash.

Naadu:

Sometimes you don't understand what is going on in the news and it's long.

Sam: One hour (meaning too long)

It may be inferred that they were not always keen on watching the news as they found it too long or boring, dominated by disasters, and delivered in an adult language register which they did not always fully understand. That notwithstanding, for many young people, some news viewing was unavoidable because of the frequency of news broadcasts and repetitions, and certain news times (like News at Ten) were usually a scheduled domestic ritual for some parents. Since bad news was prioritised by news producers, children were regularly informed about an adult world of danger and disaster which some children would rather avoid as the comment by the six year old (above) suggests. Joshua Meyrowitz (1986: 238) makes reference to how *television* 'escorts children across the globe even before they have permission to cross the street'. The secure home environment could not protect them from the intrusion of the harsher realities of the wider world transmitted electronically (Meyrowitz, 1986: vii). News was the means by which they learned of the 'significant' events of the times

¹ Date interviewed: 7-10-2006

² Date interviewed: 8-10-2006

³ Date interviewed: 6-4-06

such as the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre (9/11), the July 2005 London bombings (7/7), wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the perceived escalation in gun and knife crime and gang violence among the youth in London, among others. These impacted on how they viewed the world and their immediate locality, and how they reacted to such perceptions.

Among the respondents there was a general endorsement of the *credibility*¹ of the news. A respondent went as far as to say “*watching 7/7 on telly made me see first hand exactly what went on*”². However, confidence in the factual accuracy of the news was not shared by all to the same degree. A minority of sceptics, typically British-born Ghanaians, expressed reservations about the news, with suggestions that the news was sometimes embellished, doctored or exaggerated:

I only watch the news when I am in the living room and my dad is watching it. But I don't believe the news that you watch on TV or that you read is the actual truth. So I watch it and I take it in but I'm not sure it is the truth so I don't observe it too much.
(Korkor, schoolgirl aged 16, Streatham Vale Family (D.O.I: 1-10-06)

However, she admitted that the news made her aware of conflicts and other events around the world. For others the perception of the news as a construct was derived from first-hand experience:

I've seen first hand how they manipulate the news. Once I was in Brixton with my friend playing Badminton and there'd been some issue. We heard a rumour that there was gonna be riots in Brixton so we should get out before anything happened. So me and my friends left and there was nothing going on. You could see the Police around but nothing ever broke out. Come to watch the news now and you saw the way that they edited the footage to make it look like there was a riot there. And if you hadn't been there you could easily believe what they did because what they were doing was, they would show the Police with their riot gear but you didn't actually see any rioters. But the way they pieced it together and edited it, gave the impression that something was

¹ **Factual quality of the news:**

Commenting on the lengths newsmakers go to maintain the factual quality of the news, Van Dijk explains that news rhetoric involves strategic devices that enhance truthfulness, plausibility, correctness, precision, and credulity. These devices include, numbers, selective sources, specific modifications in relevance relations, ideologically coherent perspectives in the description of events, the use of specific scripts or attitude schemata, the selective uses of reliable, official, well-known, and especially credible persons and institutions, the description of close, concrete details, the quotations of eyewitnesses or direct participants, and the reference or appeal to emotions (Van Dijk, 1988b: 93-94).

Similarly, Fisk and Hartley (1996) suggest that in news presentation there is greater intervention of pre-televisual codes of literacy in the form of clarity, consistency, 'logical' exposition of causes, balance, and precision, all derived via journalistic codes, the modes of thought appropriate to literate discourse, even though TV is regarded as more of an oral medium.

² Madam Ardee, aged 51, nurse & mother

happening and nothing had actually happened. When I saw that I lost all faith in the news cos I knew that that's what they do, they actually directly manipulate. (Kwaaley aged 38 Manager (D.O.I: 12-12-06).

Such experiences affirm views that the news is constructed from particular perspectives and corroborates the assertion that while the stories may be true, the news is produced with a view to coherence that belies the complexity of situations (Van Dijk, 1988: 154).¹

The news is not ideologically neutral either and yet it is influential in shaping people's views of the world around them and their responses to issues. In this particular instance involving the 'riot' in Brixton, which from another perspective, never was, in all likelihood, the impression would feed into the perceptions of viewers elsewhere who did not have the benefit of being at the scene of the alleged 'riots' to make up their own minds. They may then form opinions and make judgements based on the newsmakers' perspective which may not necessarily represent the whole truth and may be subject to shifts in emphasis or contain exaggerations. This may reinforce previously held notions and prejudices about the place and the people there, or create such impressions if they did not already exist. Brixton was the scene of a previous race riot which may have influenced the approach to events on this occasion. The tendency is for events and the way they are depicted to become a cycle of sedimented representations of places and peoples, which derived from ideological perspectives or fed into them.²

It may be inferred from the responses that whereas the older generation of Ghanaians tended to accept the news as reliable objective fact, the British-born Ghanaian young adults were less inclined to regard the news with unquestioning credulity or as

¹ Van Dijk explains that processes of news production are governed by a specific (lexical) style and a special schematic format and rhetoric, and that the final news report undergoes cognitive and textual transformations from the separate source texts, presenting a more focussed, personalised or dramatised account of events (Van Dijk, 1988: 154). News focussed attention on selected events and privileged certain perspectives. While the stories may be true, the news is produced with a view to coherence that belies the complexity of situations.

² Such media characterisations have repercussions for residents, the local economy and property values, among others. The local area may become the focus of regeneration efforts or be seen as a place to avoid by certain social groups and big business.

A similar impression was gathered from Ghanaian residents of the *Broadwater Farm Estate* in Tottenham, the scene of a riot on the 6th of October 1985 by Blacks in reaction to the death of a Black woman, Cynthia Jarrett, at the hands of the police. A White policeman, PC Keith Blakelock, was killed in retaliation by a mob. Decades after the incident, and despite the regeneration and transformation that had occurred on the Estate since the event, the characterisation of the *Broadwater Farm Estate* and references to it in the media and by politicians remained negative and without a basis in fact, given the prevailing peaceful atmosphere on the Estate.

incontrovertible fact.¹ But like the rest of society, the subjects, on the whole, made decisions or adjustments according to the construct of reality presented to them on the news. The news therefore provided a context in which people lived their lives and made sense of the world notwithstanding the variations in perceptions of the objectivity, impartiality, and credibility of the news.

9.2: Some significant local and global news events of the study period (2005-2007)

The attacks of 9/11 coming after the fall of Communism marked a defining chapter in geo-politics. The new fault line which it revealed and deepened was interpreted in many quarters as a clash of civilisations between Western liberal democratic values and a resurgent political and militant Islam. Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (after 9/11) and a series of terrorist attacks in places such as Bali (2002 and 2005), Morocco (2003), Madrid (2004), London (2005), and other places, became staging posts in this new global conflict. In the Middle East, apart from the long running conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, war broke out between Israel and Hezbollah of Lebanon (2006). Danish cartoons aroused anger in the Muslim world (2006).

In the United Kingdom, the 7th July 2005 (7/7) terrorist bombings in London, like 9/11, became a defining event. Muslims came under suspicion and debates about the nature and direction of multiculturalism intensified. The chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, added to the debate with warnings over ghetto communities and Britain sleepwalking into segregation. Jack Straw also sparked controversy with comments about Muslim women's face veil as a hindrance to integration.

Other significant events included outbreaks of Foot and Mouth disease in livestock in Britain, the Bird Flu epidemic and concerns about global warming, mass-casualty natural disasters such as the Boxing Day Asian Tsunami of 2005, and earthquakes in various places. In London gun and knife crime and gang-related violence appeared to escalate, or perhaps seemingly so, as a news agendum of a problem on the rise.

¹ The generational difference is borne out from statements such as
"watching 7/7 on telly made me see first hand exactly what went on" (Ardee, 51, older generation)
"I've seen first hand how they manipulate the news (Kwaaley, 38, British-born)
"I watch it and I take it in but I'm not sure it is the truth so I don't observe it too much" (Korkor, schoolgirl aged 16, British-born)

9.3: News, a sense of geography, and the world as one:

Television news and weather reports bring geography to life. Visual aids used in news programmes include satellite images of places on earth, computer-generated models, aerial photographs, maps, and pictures from action spots. A sense of where people live in relation to other places is often gained from such representative models used in news and weather reports. Pictures of the earth as seen from outer space enable viewers to see the earth as spherical. An understanding of the world as a globe, single, interconnected place¹ was thus gained through watching the world news. Local events could be understood in the context of the global. Even disparate news events around the world seem like coherent bit-parts of the world as a whole². Knowledge of the interconnectedness of the world brought a realisation of how an event in one place could have consequences somewhere else or for everyone, and therefore, heightened awareness of shared risks from epidemics, conflicts, international terrorism, natural disasters, and environmental problems.

The apparent randomness of disasters and conflicts led one middle-aged man to reflect in a conversation that:

The world is like porridge on the boil; one moment trouble pops up in one spot, and then a different spot the next. You never know where the next one would erupt. Nowhere is safe. It is just by the grace of God that we live (Ray aged 57, businessman).

Younger viewers shared similar concerns:

³Mamley (aged 17):

Just because we live in Europe or that we're not on the boundary or whatever doesn't mean we are safe. There are still little earth tremors. Who knows when the big ones could hit?

⁴Natasha, 16:

Nowhere in the world is safe. Everywhere you go it can happen. An earthquake happened in Kent and a tornado near my house in Kensal Green.

¹ Relevant concepts of time-space compression and globalisation (Harvey 1989; Giddens, 1990; Robertson, 1990) are discussed in chapter two.

² This impression of coherence of disparate events is the subject of a reflection in a poem: 'While I talk and the flies buzz, a seagull catches a fish at the mouth of the Amazon, a tree falls in the Adirondack wilderness, a man sneezes in Germany, a horse dies in Tattany, and twins are born in France. What does that mean? Does the contemporaneity of these events with one another, and with a million others as disjointed, form a rational bond between them, and write them into anything that resembles for us a world?' (Fulcrum/Writing a World by David Morley, poet (b. 1964)

³ Group interview, Date: 9-2-2007 @ Turnpike Lane, North London

⁴ Group interview, Date: 7-1-2007 @ Kensington, West London

News also brought into living rooms images of war and devastation from distant locations. Tele-mediation of such events has been a subject of arguments, with critics suggesting that the phenomenological distance between the viewer and the actual event creates a moral detachment. They suggest that TV anaesthetises the viewer emotionally and morally. Kevin Robins expresses this as ‘dispassionate proximity’, or ‘intimate detachment’ (Robins, 1994: 461). He queries how television audiences appear to be relatively unscathed by the violence of war, wondering about how such realities are diffused (Robins, 1994: 458). While these are reasonable arguments, putting experience through television aside, it may be pointed out that history shows how in direct experience of war some people show a callous capability to commit acts of cruelty or atrocities, or get used to violence, which could not be attributed to the ‘anaesthetising effect’ of TV. Moreover, responses gathered from interviewees (subsequently cited) indicate that the human misery and suffering caused by natural disasters and conflict, though far away, were brought home to television viewers with profound effect.

9.4: Reactions to news of natural disasters (non-moral evil):

Like other major disasters, the Boxing Day tsunami of December 2004 in Asia which claimed over 250,000 lives, was witnessed by young and old alike on television and the impact of such calamities engendered various humanitarian responses from most of the subjects as they participated in charitable activities. Extracts of some of the reflections on the Asian tsunami and other disasters include this response from the parents of the *Walworth Family*¹:

Ankrah, father, aged 46:

The tsunami as seen on TV brought home the sense that we humans are vulnerable to the forces of nature. It was touching to see the devastation on TV. We responded to appeals on TV with cash donations through the Tsunami Victims Support and Oxfam. Without TV I probably wouldn’t know about these things or respond to them. The Western countries tend to cope better with natural disasters. They have mapped out most places and identified potential trouble spots and where various things like hurricanes are likely to occur. So living here, there is a better sense of safety, but you can’t write off these things and something devastating could happen. Also with global warming becoming another issue things are less predictable.

Mrs Ankrah, mother, aged 43:

They claim that if an earthquake struck in the Atlantic, there could be like a tsunami effect here in the UK since we live on an island.

¹ Date of interview: 9-12-2006

Fifteen year old Nicola of the *White Hart Lane Family*¹ described how through the school system they organised and channelled monetary contributions to disaster victims. Her account was typical of responses from other young people:

I think it is sad and heart-breaking to watch people's families that have been killed and everything. It makes me think that we don't know what is going to happen in the future so anything could happen ... My school always responds to appeals for help for disaster victims in other countries. We raise money. If we have like non-uniform day we pay one pound or fifty pence and it goes towards charity. It is optional but everyone takes part. Sometimes we have talks at assembly and it can change minds. They talk about people in Africa or Asia, or anywhere around the world where people are suffering and they have like no clean water, hardly any food, and people that have been hit by floods, how little children are dying almost everyday and how they need our help ... Compared to other people in need we are like living in luxury and we are like rich and we are not doing anything for them and we are not helping. So I donate my clothes to make someone who receives them happy. I take them to charity shops. Sometimes we do it in school. Its something we call the shoebox appeal. We wrap up our old things in a shoe box with Christmas wrapping paper, and we send it to other countries that aren't fortunate and do not have the luxuries that we have. My mum and dad do it as well.

Schoolchildren from other families also participated in disaster relief through the school system where charitable giving was encouraged and organised:²

Abena, girl, aged 17:

When they showed the tsunami, we had a fund raising event at school. We were given permission to colour our hair differently as part of the event.

Dela, girl, 14:

I also give money and clothes to charity. At school we have charity week as well. We do different things. We have an event; we do competitions, self-painting and stuff. You choose a charity and direct your contributions to it

Ohenewa girl, 15:

We give clothes and money to charity (to orphans, children in need, Christian Aid etc). We do it from school and when I'm at home we give our clothes to some charity. Sometimes they come round to our house to collect clothes.

When our clothes are too old my mum goes to shops like Oxfam, Red Cross and Cancer Research to give them away

³ Mamley, girl aged 17:

At my school we all raised money for the Hurricane Katrina victims and stuff like that. Everyone paid their money for tickets and stuff like that.

⁴ Patricia (aged 10):

On the news I saw people dying of hunger, flies, diseases, earthquakes... in Asia and a lot of places. We have more things than them so we should give some to them than keep it. In London we've got lots of things and in other

¹ Date of interview: 7-10-2006

² Group interview of young people @ Kensington, West London, Date: 8-1-07

³ Group interview @ Turnpike Lane, North London, Date: 7-2-07)

⁴ Child from Olive Grove Family - Date visited: 28-7-2006

places they only have dirty water and all them lot. So I give away my toys that are not broken, my trousers, my shoes, my bags, my clothes, my money to charity, so they can buy things for themselves ... *We should try and make the environment a better place and take care of other people, and take care of the world.*

In a previous era the subjects may never have known about disasters that occurred on the other side of the world. But now the constant flow of news brings awareness of major events anywhere in the world, often in real time. News reports, particularly television footage of devastation elsewhere, enabled the viewers to appreciate the relative comforts of their modest circumstances in London which seemed 'luxurious' when compared to others elsewhere in the world. Sharing resources to mitigate devastation, or alleviate the difficulties of the less fortunate, naturally flowed out of empathy and identification with fellow human beings elsewhere.

It is also significant that they received such information as people living in the West. They acknowledged that the West prepared for, and coped with disaster situations better, which therefore created some sense of safety relative to other places. But they also recognised the unpredictability of natural events, the possibility that anything could happen anywhere at anytime. Living in the West also meant that they were better placed to help others. Their assistance for disaster victims and needy people elsewhere were more effectively mobilised and channelled through the school system and aid organisations, which enabled them to meaningfully connect with the rest of the world without leaving their local environment.

The statement by the 10 year that '*we should try and make the environment a better place and take care of other people, and take care of the world*', indicates an early awareness of concerns over the environment which could be attributed to environmental campaigns as well as formal education. Such thoughtfulness about taking responsibility for the wider world, coming from a child, is indicative of an early development of a cosmopolitan vision, sensibility, and disposition, and of global citizenship and inclusiveness, attributes that are linked to an understanding of the world as one.

For the subjects news reception was a mediated experience of a world without boundaries, a single place where disasters were random. The 'one world' unity of the globe was complemented by a psychological unity derived from a sense of common

fate and vulnerability. Their participation in relief efforts through contributions to charity emphasised the bonds which united common humanity even when the beneficiaries were distant peoples. In such situations the welfare of fellow humans took precedence over divisive 'us' and 'them' notions of perceiving the world.

9.5: Fall-outs of terrorism - aftermath of 7/7:

The London attacks of 7th July 2005 by Islamic militants had far-reaching consequences for individuals and groups. It traumatised individuals and left a legacy of fear and suspicion. It also fractured community relations and put pressure on civil liberties. Its effects continued to reverberate across British society during the study. Reflections of the subjects, samples of which are reproduced in this section, indicated its direct and indirect impact and implications:

Mrs. Quaye):

It is a small number of people who because of their religion feel that those of us who do not share their beliefs should all be eliminated from the land so only people who share their faith would remain. So they hate all other people, especially those who do better than them (Mrs Quaye aged 68)¹

Kwaaley:

To me if you're an Islamic fundamentalist in Pakistan or Palestine or whatever, as much as I don't agree with what you're doing at least I can understand that you have some frustration. The boys over here (in Britain) getting into it I have no patience for whatsoever because I feel they are being indulgent. They are attaching themselves to something because it's a craze for them. You know how the guys over here orchestrated the 7/7 thing. They annoy me because all they do is rain down trouble on their own (Muslim) community and on the Black community as well. They're just giving the police an opening to interrogate us and attack us when things were getting better (for black people). Because of things like the Stephen Lawrence case and other things that have happened, the police have been put into line somehow, even though not entirely. Then this terrorism thing comes out and it will be like they will re-introduce things like the stop-and-search laws all over again. They've rained down trouble on us again now (Kwaaley, aged 38, Manager)².

From a black perspective the gains made from previous protests over racist policing, were thought to have all but evaporated with the post 7/7 increase in surveillance. The feeling was that some Muslims had caused a situation of heightened security and

¹ Date interviewed: 15-12-06

² Date interviewed: 12-12-06

surveillance and black people in general, were paying a price¹. The response of Kwaaley, which represented a widespread feeling among the respondents, is indicative of the processes of identity formation or re-imagination that the terrorist events triggered. The inconveniences of security checks they experienced at airports were blamed on the activities and threats of Islamic militants. Prior to the attacks, politics around minoritisation was a locus of solidarity among the diverse groups of immigrant communities in Britain as they faced common challenges related to citizenship and racism. As mentioned earlier,² 'Black' identity previously embraced a coalition of non-white minorities in Britain. That solidarity had begun to unravel as Asians and Muslims emphasised their separate identities. The events of 7/7 and subsequent perceptions (also gathered from the media and reflected in the responses) of the politicisation of Islamic identity and its exclusivist outlook catalysed the feelings of otherness generated vis-à-vis the Muslim community. The events therefore opened up or deepened fractures in community relations. For Ghanaians who were not Muslims these events raised their consciousness of difference and separation from a redefined Islamic identity in Britain, where previously such distinctions were glossed over or subsumed to common welfare objectives of minority ethnic groups.

The trauma of the terror attacks and the redefined lines of social division were not lost on young people as they reflected on the London bombings of 7/7. This brief extract from conversation on 7/7 by siblings at the *Walworth Family* home bears this out:³

Fred, aged 15:

I saw the London bombings on the news. I was scared and I didn't know what to do. Because of that I'm always cautious when I'm on the bus.

Judy, aged 10:

(After a pause and with hesitation) I knew that Muslims were bad people because of what they did.

Mark, aged 18:

I thought it was stupid though. They said it was a religion thing because they had to kill themselves for God. I think it was stupid.

The impact of news of the attacks on Fred (above) was common among young people as it emerged in other interviews:

I saw the events of 7/7 on the news and it scared me. I didn't use train. I do now only once in a while. (Dela, girl aged 15)¹

¹ Figures released by the police carried on the news on 10th July 2008 indicated that black people were stopped and searched by the police seven times more than whites.

² See discussion of Black identity in Britain in Chapter 4

³ Date: 8-10-2006

The immediate impact on them was one of trauma, not from direct physical experience but from mediated experience of the events through TV. Fear-induced behaviour was common to young and old alike when they stepped out of their homes and onto public transport, as indicated by most of the respondents. This suggests that mediated experience could be just as profound and lifestyle-changing as direct experience (pace Kevin Robins, 1994: 461, 458)². Subsequently their attention was drawn to the identity issues involved in the events and they developed self and other identity differentiations vis-à-vis Muslims. Awareness of Muslims as a group was heightened by the news coverage of the attacks. The sense of their different identity ('they'), the impression that these were 'bad people' (Judy) and that the actions stemming from their beliefs were 'stupid' (Mark), were all pieced together from the news stories. Another group of teenagers³ expressed more sophisticated views on the events and their significance. The role of Muslims as the perpetrators, and the perception of Bush and Blair as warmongers were discussed:

Ms. Mamley aged 17:

Muslims are not bad people. It's only those who support Jihad and all that. But Muslims in this country are acting as if we all owe them something; like whoever does not support Islam should be dead. If Islam is so great in your country then why didn't you stay there, why are you here? We haven't really done anything to you. And 7/7, even a Ghanaian died in there. That's what gets on my nerves; a Ghanaian woman died leaving three children and a husband.

Leticia aged 17:

I think the Muslims have spoiled things for themselves. When a Muslim enters a bus everyone is tense until they get off.

Ben, aged 15:

This boy is in my school. He is in my year and he says that when he grows up he wants to become a Taliban. He's an Afghan Muslim. He is my age yeah, and he's already thinking about that. You can imagine that.

Kwartei, boy aged 15).

I think the government - Tony Blair and George Bush are to blame because they sent their troops out to war in another country (Iraq) in the name of the war on terror. The Middle-East was already messed up without Bush's help. He did not have to go there and try to re-arrange Iraq the way he wanted. It's not his country. The fact that Saddam and Arafat are dead does not mean he could come and control other people's country. And Tony Blair, I don't know what he's doing except being George Bush's poodle. So many people in this country said 'we don't want this war'. If we weren't involved, I doubt 7/7 would have happened.

¹ Date: 8-1-2007. Group interview (Kensington, West London)

² His arguments about the anaesthetizing effect of television were considered previously in this chapter under the caption '*News, a sense of geography & the world as one*'

³ Group interview @ Turnpike Lane, North London, Date: 9-2-2007

The news framed their understanding of the world. It brought awareness, even if rudimentary, of the world and their place in it. They understood that they were part of a world in which what happened in one part affected other parts too as they linked the war in Iraq to the London bombings. They realised that they were not insulated from happenings far or near. This brought a sense of vulnerability and fear which induced changes in behaviour (such as not using trains or being careful on public transport).

From the *Tottenham Green Family*¹ similar experiences of trauma were narrated. But there was also a slightly different take on the events involving a navigation of the complexities of group behaviour and media stereotyping:

Musa 17:

The news makes you stereotype groups of people. When you see like Muslim people news could... in making the news they're making it seem like "this is how they all operate. That's how they all are" - discrimination. Extremist Muslims are putting a bad name on the religion. I couldn't say it's a minority or the majority now. Previously I considered Muslims to be righteous, and even my dad was a Muslim. But now, with all that is going on, they're putting a bad name on the religion. So I think it's up to the individual.

Inferences that can be drawn from these views include the engagement with media discourses and information, and the identity positionalities that conflict produced. The media served as a source of information about current events and framed the subjects' understanding of such events. There were different levels of engagement with the news. The interest of teenagers in news was greater than that of the pre-teens. It is therefore inferred that as the children grew older their level of engagement with media discourses increased. They picked up on media stereotyping of groups. Their sense of political geography with the cursory references to the Middle-East, Saddam and Arafat, the hegemonic alliance between Britain and the US in trying to 're-arrange Iraq', is arguably media derived. They were familiar with terms such as 'war on terror' coined by the Bush administration, 'Jihad' and other terminologies referred to in the media, and were critical of the role played by the British government in the Iraq conflict, reflecting a familiarity with media discourses on the events, including Blair being regarded as a 'poodle of Bush'. This showed that despite the appearance of ambivalence to news and the distraction involved in its viewing, they developed an understanding of issues from information on the news.

¹ Date of interview: 3-2-2007

Regarding identities, the media provided a prism through which self and other identities were imagined. Perceptions and opinions were formed about social groups from what young people learned from events. There was an awareness of different identities against which young people defined themselves. Their identity (as young Ghanaian-Londoners) was also defined by what they were not, and the news provided frames by which difference was understood, especially through identity-related events such as 7/7. Terrorist incidents put the spotlight on Muslims, who were seen as emphasising their separateness from the rest of society. General information gathered from the news was also linked to the definition of various social categories along such lines as gender, generation, ethnicity and race, and the subjects' location within such identity categories, and across multiple frames of reference - local, regional, national, international and global. They were Londoners, Britons, Ghanaians, Africans, and Blacks at the same time and the news provided contexts in which each facet of their multiple identities was activated.

Conflict often compels people to choose sides, to define who they are in relation to others. The expression *'If we (in Britain) weren't involved, I doubt 7/7 would have happened'* (Kwartei), was a typical demonstration of how the conflict positioned them. Like millions of others they were not in favour of going to war in Iraq, and yet as British citizens they felt caught up in it, jointly sharing responsibility for a war they opposed. This reflected the complex positioning that conflict brought up. In this case, although it was not their Ghanaian or black identities that were engaged, the reference made to a Ghanaian who died in the attacks, the anger provoked, and the perception of common purpose among Muslims, all impacted on the sentiments of the respondents. This new conflict that divided society and which they struggled to make sense of, in a way, served to redefine young Ghanaians' sense of belonging and their positioning within a complex set of relational identities.

In summary, the news brought knowledge of events in the world and this fed into national and transnational imaginations of identity (religious and other) and stirred up various sentiments. The news shows the interweaving between the global and the local, providing an illustration of what Anthony Giddens described in terms of disembedding mechanisms (see page 17). These dynamics were present in events such as 9/11 and 7/7, events which were linked to transnational Islamic identity and had

local repercussions. Ghanaian-Londoners were caught up in the cross-fire of these events and the issues they raised. As conflicts define identities and allegiances, in the circumstances, different positions were assumed. Islamic militancy was understood by many as an indiscriminate threat to non-Muslims which created a 'them' against 'us' polarity. The older generation brought up in Ghana had prior experience of living side-by-side with Muslim communities in relative harmony, where otherness was not conflictual. Some adults, who already had issues with American or Western hegemony and their involvement in conflicts around the world, regarded events such as 9/11 in the context of a backlash to that hegemony. Opinion was however divided over Islamic fundamentalism. Some regarded it as a minority phenomenon while others read a common Islamic purpose from it. Thus the news served multiple purposes and provided frames in which complex sets of relations were worked out and identities re-imagined or re-aligned, as reflected in the Ghanaian responses.

Contrasts between reactions to *moral evil* on one hand, and *non-moral evil* on the other, also provided some food for thought. In both cases sympathy is prompted and exercised in different ways. However, whereas moral evil in the form of violence due to human agency usually reinforced the sense of difference, mobilised and polarised identities around hostility, non-moral evil in the form of natural disasters, had a different effect as the sympathy and humanitarian responses it prompted tended to unite people in the cause of human welfare. Thus whereas faultlines emerged between communities in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, the response to natural disasters had the opposite effect as people pulled together to support victims. The Ghanaian responses to either incidences may be understood in this context.

9.6: A Diet of Bad News:

As has already been established, viewers' perception of the world is partly moulded by information in the media. News production values prioritise deviance and negativity and news is therefore often about conflict, crime, scandals, disasters and problems (Van Dijk, 1988b: 121)¹. Depressing stories and features on crime, violence,

¹ Ironically, bad news is attractive to newsmakers because it meets a criterion for newsworthiness and gets the attention of audiences. It is thought that this may be a reflection of people's own fears and involves participation by proxy. Besides, negative information, especially when deviance about outgroups is involved, helps define and confirm the ingroup by the application of a consensus of social norms and values of the ingroup by which contrasts with outgroups or outcasts are emphasised. Deviant models can also be better recalled and used in everyday conversation (Van Dijk, 1988b: 123)

and threats were therefore regular fare on the news menu and this had an impact on people's sense of security. But the precautions they took had social implications. The heightened sense of fear and paranoia deterred people from opening up to others, resulting in insular¹ attitudes and accentuated a mistrust of strangers. A respondent recounted his dilemma when a stranger desperately implored him for help, but he could not let go of his own fears:

A man came banging on my door, apparently terrified and shouting 'please let me in, they will kill me'. But I couldn't let him in, in case it was a ploy to get into my flat to rob me. And so I did not respond to his plea for help.
(Peprah, 51, Barrister)²

Afterwards he struggled with the sense of guilt in going against his natural instinct to help another person in need. He recalled how back in the environment where he grew up in Ghana people readily responded to any alarm raised and came to the aid of even strangers, and regretted that in London things were different. This draws attention to the indirect and inadvertent implications of a regular fare of news of crime as it induced caution and changed attitudes. It needs be mentioned that unlike small town or village communities where relations are more intimate and sometimes everybody knows everyone else, urban spaces tend to have an impersonal feel, and the mix of different nationalities, as in London, tended to disrupt the communal spirit. In public places numbers of people did not necessarily translate into any sense of communality, and even next-door neighbours could remain strangers for years.

In another instance from the *Streatham Hill family*³, eleven year old girl, Naadu, born in Ghana, who had now joined her parents in London, overheard yet another news item on crime and quickly became aware of the frequency of news reports about crime. As the news was being read, she remarked: "*in this country the news is full of killing, death, murder*". This impression she gathered from the regular news features on crime was a reflection of a general perception. Ironically her father was pleased

Bad news makes the headlines but a happy ending makes the news more interesting. Stories about problems, conflict or disaster require happy endings because they serve as simulations or proxy-participation models, suggests Van Dijk. They are also needed as models of problem solving and the re-establishment of shared norms and values of a culture, hence the prominence given to the role of the police in crime stories and of rescue operations in disaster stories (Van Dijk, 1988b: 123).

¹ A new research has revealed that people scarcely talk to their neighbours and if they do, it is to moan about noise, pets and parking. Londoners were the least friendly in the survey on interaction with neighbours. Just 11 per cent were in contact with their neighbours, 10 percent lower than the national average. (The London Metro 18 June, 2008)

² Date of conversation, 11-11-2006

³ The Streatham Hill Family visit, Date:20-4-06

that she had become aware of dangers ‘out there’, an awareness that he thought would keep her on her guard when she was out and about, as did many wary parents who felt the need to use news stories to warn their children. Unsurprisingly, children often spent more time indoors than outdoors. For Ghanaians this was a significant shift from their outdoor open-air orientation.

Youth crime & related issues

The news often headlined juvenile delinquency especially in London. During the period of the study, there was an apparent escalation in violent crime involving guns and knives in London, usually involving young people, which claimed many young lives and caused fear. News about youth violence portrayed them as victims as well as perpetrators and many young respondents felt criminalised by association.

I went to Morrisons and I had a hooded top on¹. I only bought a packet of crisps and I was going towards the till near the entrance to pay for it. The security guard approached me. He thought I was gonna steal something because I had my hood up. And he said I shouldn’t go to jail over a packet of crisps and stuff like that. And I was thinking “does this guy think I’m gonna steal something because I was wearing a hood”. I wasn’t thinking of the bad publicity that wearing a hood had attracted. I was just thinking of keeping my ears warm (Mamley, girl, aged 17)²

Among the young, therefore, there was not just the fear of crime but also some resentment that they were regarded with suspicion, particularly as they were young blacks. This made them acutely aware of the different and more welcoming experience they had during their holidays in Ghana. Not only did they feel more secure, they were not looked upon with suspicion, and the sense of unconditional acceptance was comforting. This was the impression gathered from various interview responses, a few extracts of which are reproduced here.³ When asked about how prepared they were to live in Ghana their thoughts quickly turned to comparisons on crime, among other issues:

Ababio, girl aged 17:

I can live in Ghana forever cos I like the weather there. It’s hot. I just wake up and I go out and like 10pm at night I could still be outside with my cousins

¹ Hoodies’, a reference to young people wearing hooded tops, which some young criminals used to hide their identity when committing offences, became synonymous with anti-social behaviour. What was youth fashion to some became an emblem of delinquency.

² Turnpike Lane group interview, North London, D.O.I: 9-2-07

³ Group interview recorded at Woodgreen, North London on 7-1-2007

and there's no fear of someone coming to stab you or something. You just go out.

Yaaley, girl aged 17:

Yeah, in the night you just stroll around. No one bothers you

Ama girl aged 19 (student):

But here you have to know where to put your phone in your sock or your bra. We do watch Crimewatch so we know how to conduct yourself outside, where to put your phone... Here because of what goes on, the crime and what you hear on the news you're looking back every time when you hear noise. And when you are by yourself and you see a group of people you'd be intimidated because they are more than you and probably look intimidating so you'd be scared. But in Ghana everyone is so humble and calm and they say 'hello' 'hello' even though you don't know them. But here it's not like that.

Abena, girl aged 16:

Also in Ghana everyone is like polite to you – hi, good morning, how are you? But in London if you say that to them, they'll just look at you with a 'you-don't-know-me' kind of look.

A similar view was expressed elsewhere:

Duah, male aged 19 (student): ¹

When I go to Ghana, I look around and see people, it's like 'hey, Charlie, Charlie'... nice. It's like wow! People love each other. People get on more. People have respect for their elders. It's like if a stranger sees a young boy with his trousers down or misbehaving (rough, rough), he can tell him off. But in this country it's against the law. So I just prefer Ghana and also it's my home country.

It is remarkable that they readily picked up on cultural differences such as respect for elders, a friendlier atmosphere, a regard for strangers, and a communal spirit that permitted adults to correct wrongdoing by children who were not even their own children, which derived from the waning tradition of communal supervision of children. Although their views were largely based on holiday experiences they, nevertheless, reflected general perceptions, including those of their parents' generation.² But other factors suggest that the holiday experiences of the young people duly reflected the calmer, more relaxed environment in their homeland, which was sometimes attested to by foreign visitors to Ghana.

Besides, the critical gaze of the British media and public on the youth as troublemakers and delinquents was a source of displeasure and alienation. But the dignity accorded them in their parents' homeland, especially as privileged overseas-

¹ Member of the Tottenham Green Family, Date of interview: 3-2-07

² These may have been derived from comparisons between the greater media coverage of events in London which may have created the impression, true or exaggerated, of high levels of crime. But London's crime levels could be proportionate to its 7.7 million population size, compared to the 1.8 million plus population of Accra, Ghana's capital (Source: www.ask.com/web; www.google.com.)

based young people, coupled with the sense of security they enjoyed there, left them with happy feelings and comforting thoughts, and was a source of pride in their identity. Crime may be rife in London, but in Ghana they enjoyed a great atmosphere devoid of negative labels; a place where neither their youth nor colour was criminalised. Since their views were based on short term holiday experiences they could be seen as a romanticised view of an uncomplicated and care-free existence in the homeland. But older Ghanaians, who had actually lived and grown up in Ghana, also had similar views and often enthused about the convivial aspects of life in the homeland. In many ways they endorsed the views of the younger ones.

Back in London some adults had their own views on news of juvenile delinquency. They partly blamed it on state interference in child rearing, and drew comparisons with their Ghanaian experience of child discipline:

Rev. Agyemang:

There is an awareness of danger from news but it is over-hyped. Society is not as bad as we are made to believe. Gun culture, violence etc. are only symptoms of what is gone wrong. A few youths are into this culture of violence but it's symptomatic. The news sets me thinking. People emphasize rights, child protection. Sometimes I feel they are contributory factors because power has been taken completely out of the hands of parents. You can't spank or raise your voice against your child. So children are made to feel untouchable and they can do anything and get away with it. And the result is sometimes what we see in the society. But where there is a balance of freedom and limitations as well... I don't think there is absolute freedom anywhere because we live in a country governed by laws and if you flout them you are incarcerated. So why aren't parents allowed to nurture their children under the same rules. A little fear is important in nurturing children
(Rev. Agyemang, clergyman, aged 49, Minister of Religion, London)¹.

Frank:

It is a symptom of moral decline and the government is partly to blame. Adults are not allowed to discipline children. If you tried, Social Services will get involved and you could be in trouble for child abuse. In Ghana an adult not related to you could discipline you or report you to your parents if you misbehaved. But here young people are given too much power by the law and they do as they please. (Frank, aged 33, Accounts clerk)²

The response by Rev. Agyemang takes a valid view that news reports tend to magnify perceived problems like youth trouble-making and crime. In these reflections, the perceived youth delinquency was linked to issues of child discipline. This was a

¹ Date interviewed: 26-4-2007

² Date interviewed: 10-1-2007

comparative evaluation of alternative models of child discipline representing many Ghanaian parents' feeling that the stricter regime in which they were brought up may have had its flaws but inculcated adequate discipline, respect, and old fashioned values in children, attributes that they thought were not being instilled in the current generation of young people in Britain. State interference in how parents corrected their children was often blamed, as child protection laws, though well-intentioned with a view to protect children from maltreatment by adults, appeared to have been stretched so far as to undermine parental will and authority to effectively discipline their own children. The threat of their children being taken into foster care was a sobering and restraining thought. The libertarian ideals driving change, questioned the use of pain, and punishment in general, as a component of discipline.

As Ghanaians grappled with the issues of youth violence as highlighted by the media, their diagnosis suggested a link with the taking of control away from parents, creating conditions which produced feral youth. But the urban youth violence and crime in London was often gang-related and probably involved more complicated causal factors. It raised concerns about the kind of environment in which their children were being raised. Some parents considered sending their children back to the homeland for education, for the kind of stricter discipline in schools which helped shape their own lives. Their diagnosis of the problem, however, represented a critique of the shortcomings of the prevailing notions of parenting which undermined more traditional approaches to raising children. It also represented a valorisation of the system in which they had been brought up, aspects of which they drew upon to shape the lives of their children. They had moved on from harsher approaches to child discipline which permitted corporal punishment of children, such as obtained in the homeland, but they did not altogether endorse the prevailing approaches and policies which governed child-rearing in the society they now lived in. As they figured out the best system for their children, they settled for a combination of selected elements from both models.

9.7: News-talk:

It is acknowledged that the media provide materials for conversation (Lazarsfeld, 1940; Boskoff, 1970; Bausinger, 1984; Lull, 1990). Scannel reiterates that broadcasting functions to ease and sustain social interaction and lubricates speech: 'It

is perhaps the one thing in the UK (apart from the weather) that we all have in common as a topical resource' (Scannell, 1989: 155). According to him, broadcasting integrates the public and private through broadcast talk in the domestic and public realms of reception. Such talk can reveal much about the structures of identity and quality of public life, among other things (Scannell, 1990: 20-21). These observations were confirmed in this study which found that news stories provided topics for conversation at various Ghanaian social gatherings. These were unstructured and spontaneous discussions around topical issues, sometimes animated but decorous. Information gathered on the news often provided cues to the omnibus conspectus of issues.

The home of civil servant Auntie Dei was the setting for one such typical coming together of family and friends. At this Christmas party during fieldwork in 2006, conversation flowed back and forth endlessly over a plethora of lively topics, from personal experiences with a happy ending, predicaments and workplace issues, to issues on the news. The major news issues included the aftermath of the devastation caused by hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in the US¹, Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe, and events in the Middle East, including the conflict between Israel and Lebanon. Like other disasters Hurricane Katrina engaged their attention as a headline news event. But more importantly, it was recalled on this occasion also because most of the victims in New Orleans were black and it was thought that racism played a part in the slow and poor response it initially got from the U.S. government, which in the past had been quicker to respond to disasters in other countries far away. This was the kind of issue around which their sense of a common black identity was activated.

Similarly, topical issues involving Africa were of interest. On this occasion it was Mugabe's Zimbabwe which also dogged the headlines and was talked about. It divided opinion. Papafio, (husband of auntie Dei), led those who argued that Mugabe had been in power for too long (since 1980) and represented the type of autocratic African leader who clung to power for life. Against that tendency, they thought Ghana's constitutional stipulation limiting each president to a maximum of two terms, was a model that should be adopted throughout Africa. This reflected a tendency to

¹ Date: 25-12-06. See chapter on Identity Matrix for extracts of the conversation on 'hurricane Katrina' at this Christmas gathering of families at Tooting in South West London

talk up Ghana's achievements in comparison with their African neighbours. But auntie Dei, who usually took the opposite view to her husband's on various issues, challenged the anti-Mugabe brigade, arguing that much of the news on Zimbabwe was Western propaganda and that if any leader stood up to them (the West) they would find ways to bring that person down. In Mugabe's case, she pointed out that it was because he allowed or instigated the seizure of White farmlands for redistribution to poor blacks that he was being vilified by the West. And she was in favour of the land redistribution since the land was, in the first place, taken from the indigenous black people, the rightful owners, during the colonial period. She recalled the negative portrayal of Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, prior to his overthrow in a coup plot alleged to be the work of the CIA. However the anti-Mugabe camp, led by Papafio, (Dei's husband), although they sympathised with the land redistribution argument, referred to previous news items which reported violent repression by the Mugabe regime of his own people (fellow black Zimbabweans), to counter the arguments made in his favour.

In these exchanges, unlike the hurricane Katrina issue on which there were no disagreements, the polarity was around a perceived hegemonic posture of the West towards smaller nations that tried to resist them. But there was also a self-censoring position adopted around their African identity which was critical of the perceived excesses of Africa's leaders, usually measured against the standards of the leading Western nations. Such armchair discussion of geo-political issues was facilitated by information gathered from news programmes.

Other international news events that entered the conversation included the war in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah, and matters relating to it:

Papafio, (retired, aged 65):

The Israelis were accused of using disproportionate force against Hezbollah. The Hezbollah leader, what's his name (Nazrallah), when he was interviewed said he didn't expect the intensity of the Israeli response and the level of destruction. I think had they known, they wouldn't have provoked the conflict by kidnapping Israeli soldiers.

Tawiah aged 50:

The Americans always take sides. Just imagine, two US ships were sent to the region (Middle East) during the conflict, one carrying arms for Israel and the other, blankets for the Lebanese. Is that even-handed? It is because American Jews influence US foreign policy.

Ato, male aged 46:

The Holocaust is deplorable but Hitler accused the Jews of pulling strings behind the scenes. So he tried to destroy them.

Tawiah: They still have influence on American politics and foreign policy.

Laryea, aged 53:

The Americans, if they support you, they turn a blind eye to your wrongs. They let their friends the Israelis have nuclear weapons and oppose the efforts of the Iranians to have nuclear power.

Auntie Dei (60):

The Jews are the bullies in the region (Middle-East).

Papafio:

Both the Jews and the Muslims are equally bad. Muslims want to dominate. Look at what the Muslims are doing. They like to use violence all the time. They claim that the Koran was written by God. But as far as I'm concerned all the scriptures were written by men. Human beings want discipline so they follow very strict fundamentalist religious orders like Islam while liberal ones like the Church of England are losing members. Muslims don't allow people to question their beliefs. You simply accept what you are told; you can't challenge or question. It is Christians who undermine our religion with all sorts of critical programmes – things like the Da Vinci Code and all that.

Auntie Dei:

I think it is white racism that makes people embrace Islam. People think of Christianity as the white man's religion. But now the spotlight is on the Muslims, with all that is going on (terrorism). There could be a backlash.

Mrs Tawiah, aged 45:

Muslims are always making demands but they will not allow free comment. They are sensitive to criticism and they take issue with every statement that is made. But this is a free country. Take this veil issue for instance, how can you go about with your face covered? The sight of it scares children.

The ebb and flow of endless conversation drifted from one issue to another. The sample of issues talked about show the agenda-setting role of the media – not telling people what to think (opinions were often divided), but what to think about, as they focus audience's attention on specific events. These extracts demonstrate appreciable general news awareness and competences on the part of the Ghanaian viewers and show how they wrestled with the dominant issues as brought to their attention by the media. Such conversation also showed the reach of the media in disseminating information among people with different backgrounds and living in different locations. They were all informed about the topical issues of the day to varying degrees enabling everyone to have some opinion. They pieced together bits of information about groups to make sense of the world around them. They understood the hegemonic behaviour of the US and the West on the world stage. These highlight the role of news in framing their understanding of geopolitics and informing their worldviews, and

illustrate its didactic potential and its role in facilitating an understanding of the world and of their place in it.

Other talking points:

Apart from political issues other stories on the news also provided talking points which spiced up conversation, and often occasioned a comparative evaluation of African and Western cultural practices. An example of this was a story on the news in 2007 about a man who unknowingly married his own biological daughter¹. She had been given up for adoption at birth and so the couple did not know that they were father and daughter when they got married and the truth came to light through a DNA test and subsequent background checks. This provoked an outburst, not so much about the incest, which is taboo in every society, but rather by the adoption procedure. In a conversation at a Ghanaian restaurant in South London, in 2007, an animated Mr Kwao, aged 70 with a copy of the London Lite newspaper carrying the story, declared:

This would never happen in Africa. People don't give away their children to strangers like that. A member of the family would step in if necessary to adopt the child so that the child remained within the wider family circle. This way they don't lose contact with their own flesh and blood for such a situation to arise where a father marries his own daughter by mistake.²

This implied a critical view of adoption by strangers as practiced in Western society and a valorisation of the African system of internal adoption by family members. But when this issue was raised in an interview elsewhere, it evoked a more balanced opinion:

For many, adoption is good. But in many cases the adoptive parents are total strangers; you don't know where they are from, or the type of families they hail from. The adopted child may get a good education and turn out very well, the kind of improved life that they would never have got from their biological parents who could be drug-dependent, or teenagers without the means to raise a child. The prospects for a child in such a situation would be grim, that is if it survives at all. And even if it survives it would lead the same kind of life of the parents. In such circumstances adoption is the best option. But in our culture, a relative would step up to raise the child together with his/ her own children. The children grow up knowing their biological parents, if they are still alive. That is our way of adopting. Ours does not involve strangers and

¹ This was before the story which appeared in 2008 of Joseph Fritzl, the Austria who imprisoned his daughter in an underground cellar and fathered several children with her.

² He was unaware of a similar incident that was reported in a Ghanaian newspaper decades earlier involving a Ghanaian couple. The man had taken a woman he met in the big city to meet her relatives in the village and to ask her hand in marriage and to perform the necessary rites, only to realise when they arrived that they both came from the same family and that she was his own daughter.

paperwork and all that. But white people don't do extended family and that is why they adopt. (Mrs. Quaye, aged over 65)¹

The comparative attitude is present in this latter comment too, but this view appreciated the merits in both systems of fostering or adoption while still affirming the value of the extended family system. This is another example of the dual or even multiple perspectives that awareness of alternatives gave them, and from which they made evaluations, and which they brought to the processing of news stories. In the case of the earlier comments by Mr. Kwao the emphatic rejection of Western approaches to adoption reflects a tendency to lose sight of the fact that social systems are subject to change, and to settle into a mindset that accepted certain social practices as given. By and large, the varying responses are also a commentary on their coming to terms with the consequences of the evolution of social systems into more complex forms. In this instance the focus was on child fostering and adoption, but the reflections and the premises from which they were derived may be said to characterise their comparative evaluations of other cultural differences. In different circumstances they either affirmed their traditions and rejected certain Western practices, or showed a preference for the alternative Western model.

In similar vein high profile divorce cases in the news involving huge multi-million settlements also provided talking points which touched on the whole social context in which such issues were worked out. The discussion of the divorce cases on the news brought up other issues around the primary focus on the nuclear family and greater freedoms for women in British society on one hand, and on the other, the enduring patriarchy and extended family system among Ghanaians and their impact on such issues as divorce. Some of these stories and issues were revisited in interviews on account of the alternative cultural perspectives that they brought up. With respect to divorce settlements on the news, which usually seemed to benefit female spouses, responses tended to reflect a rough split between male and female respondents on some of the issues. The female perspective was summed up as follows:

Auntie Dei

The black woman is never better off in divorce, never, especially, when there is property involved. It used to be the case back home that in the event of divorce or bereavement the woman usually ended up worse off. As a woman you got nothing and if you were unlucky you could be driven out of the house

¹ Date: 20-4-2008 – Second interview

by the man's relatives. Maybe things are changing. Over here usually in the event of separation it is the man who has to leave the family home. I know of instances where Ghanaian women here take full advantage and seize everything from the man ... Take the case of Paul McCartney and Heather Mills, it is annoying but to me it serves Paul McCartney right ... He ignored everyone and went for her and she came to dig her gold. But having said that I don't think she deserved a big payout. That is why some of them go for a pre-nuptial agreement. If you work with someone it's only fair that you share things evenly. But if the other person has already acquired their wealth it's wrong for you to expect an equal share of their possessions (Auntie Dei, aged 60).¹

Mrs. Quaye:

In Ghana, back when there was nothing like white man's law, when you were kicked out that was it you were finished, gone, bye bye. There was nothing like sharing of assets. The children remained with their mother and the father remained the powerful figure. Anytime he liked he could take them. Even though they have adopted European laws in Africa, such divorce laws are not applied. In a divorce situation if the man was rich he just gave the woman something small and he continued to look after his children, nothing like the sharing of his wealth or acquisitions. Most of the time as soon as a woman got married she became a housewife. She didn't have her own capital or anything and depended on the man for her livelihood, and so needed some lump sum to look after herself after divorce. So Heather McCartney is just fortunate to get £25 million. The man had other children before he married her so what about them. And she still wanted more. Some people profit from marriage unlike some of us. (Mrs. Quaye, grandmother, aged 68)²

Such reflections bring to mind the fact that apart from their struggles against racial subordination as black women, they were embroiled in issues related to gender subordination as well. Their views represented an indictment on a patriarchal system that discriminated against women back in their homeland. Against that background they appreciated the gains made in women's struggles against male domination and gender-based discrimination which are reflected in the goal of parity in divorce laws and settlements. On this occasion they took a dim view of their women's plight in their home culture. But in changing situations there were winners and losers, and in this case male views on the divorce payouts suggested they felt the pendulum had swung too far in favour of women and was getting worse still:

Male views:

Here (in Britain) in the event of separation between spouses, the man is ejected from the house which does not happen in Ghana. Even if separation were to happen (in Ghana), it would go through certain processes – elders,

¹ Second interview, Date: 2-10-2007

² Date: 20-4-2008 – Second interview

friends, families, relations, all coming in to talk to both parties (mediate). But here the woman, knowing her rights, goes straight to court and the man is thrown out. Or the house is sold and a greater proportion of the proceeds go to the woman. This is not equality... Fortunately for me my family and I keep to the traditional marriage model. But that does not mean that I treat my wife as a servant or slave in the house. Years back when our children were born, I would arrive from work and help out with the cooking and changing of nappies. It was obvious that the woman needed assistance because caring for a baby, breastfeeding at night and all that is tiring. But in other situations the woman could send the man out to do the shopping, cooking etc. while she watches television. (Kweku Nti aged 58)¹

Peprah

Women have realized that you go into marriage as a gold-digger and you come out with something. So you could see that women are taking advantage. Back in Ghana they have similar rules but they are not strictly applied. (He jokes) The court judge himself would say to the woman making a claim "look madam, stop, stop, stop... stop what you are saying and go away". (Peprah, aged 52, Barrister).²

Even the light-hearted joke about the petitioning woman being denied by the judge derived from the general recognition that patriarchal influences still prevailed in the homeland despite the adoption of Western ideas and institutions. Essentially, the debates reflected the impact of the struggles for gender equality on patriarchal systems prevalent among Ghanaians. The power of traditional authority in Ghanaian society may have been usurped by modern institutions, but traditional influences were still strong, and in some cases were brought into England. For women especially, England provided an opportunity to break from the excesses of male dominance in matters such as marriage and divorce. It was easier to be independent, and in an ironic twist, to turn the tables on men by exercising the power to expel the male partner from the home they shared, if she wanted to. Informants spoke about instances where Ghanaian women who came over as spouses, realised and took advantage of the power which women had in Britain, and kicked out the male spouse from the home they shared. In ordinary conversations overheard, some men expressed a sense of wariness over bringing a prospective wife over from the homeland for the reason that once they arrive and settle, they are very likely to exploit this new found 'girl power'. This shift in the balance of power had the tendency to make relationships between spouses tenuous, taking away the stability that the Ghanaian traditional system sustained through mediation involving the extended family, elders and friends, in the

¹ Date interviewed: 28-1-2007

² Date interviewed: 11-11-2007

event that a couple's relationship ran into difficulties. This was because in their circumstances in Britain it was preferable and advantageous for a woman to separate rather than be reconciled to her husband, with the benefits of separation as an incentive. 'Girl power' was meant to redress the gender power imbalance that patriarchy entrenched in society, but to the men, the power balance had actually shifted decisively in favour of women and at the expense of stable relationships. The re-alignment of gender relations in the diaspora and its consequences marked a significant cultural shift among Ghanaians in Britain.

It is significant that such processes of social change and their implications should emerge from a discussion of news stories. It shows how the subjects brought their competences of evaluation to the act of news processing and how the links with other domains of life were explored. The debating of news issues was a rigorous process of testing the logic and premises of arguments. News talk, or conversation about news stories, is therefore shown to be a social activity that draws on knowledge, experience, and cultural perspectives to process information presented on the news, adding to existing stocks of knowledge in a continuous sedimentary process of accumulation of knowledge and cultural capital. News processing may therefore be said to be a culturally contextualised knowledge building exercise. For the subjects this activity also involved constant comparisons between cultural models and values, some of which were validated and affirmed, while others, seen in the light of preferable alternatives or new information, were discarded. These examples indicate the transculturation processes occurring through their cultural consumption practices.

9.8: Ghana (& Africa) on the News:

As previously mentioned the respondents did not always make clear-cut distinctions between their Ghanaian, African and Black identities, like they did in other contexts¹. This was usually the case when referring to themselves in contrast to the broad White Western world. In that context Ghanaian, African and Black were intertwined and used interchangeably. It was in this sense that they sometimes responded to news issues about Ghana and Africa.

¹ See Identity Matrix chapter

News stories, according to Van Dijk, are selected often on the basis of their consonance with the ideological consensus in any given society or culture and also actions, people, and countries that are dissonant with the dominant attitudes of a given culture or country, as it confirms the negative schemata about such persons, cultures or countries (1988b: 121-2). Typically, news about Africa, framed from Western perspectives, often focused on a few types of events - usually conflicts and disasters.¹ This was not lost on the subjects:

Mrs Ankrah:

We don't get a lot of information or African news on mainstream channels or news media in this country. All the news about Africa is about war, Aids and things like that. They have a one sided view on Africa - a negative view. They never come on the news with anything good about Africa. It's all about poverty, war, disaster. They are always giving us charity hand-outs and we are always coming with begging bowls for help. That is the sort of relationship portrayed. The news is not balanced; they don't weigh both sides. Wherever there is evil, there is also good. They only weigh the bad side and talk about it and present it. That's what they want to sell. There are good sources in Africa that they can report from. But they go with a mind-set that there is nothing good in Africa. It's a dark continent. It's from that mindset that they report on Africa. (Mrs Ankrah, aged 43, mother of 4, *Walworth Family*)²

From a younger, London-born female respondent:

I would say they focus on the image of Africans being like exotic – spears, bare-footed and that sort of thing. That's not a bad thing, because to me you live in accordance with your environment, so those people that are in the bush and living barefoot or are hunting for their food - that is right for their environment. But over here they tend to see that as a backward thing, like a less civilised sort of way of life. My mum told me about Obama, how they went to Africa (Kenya) to see his grandmother or great grandmother who still lives in the village. Why did they do that? Hilary Clinton, did they go and visit her great grandmother? Why not? To me it's their way of reinforcing the impression that 'this is an African black man that you are voting for. This is the background, the civilisation that you are unrelated to. Forget about this black man that you are seeing here. This is who he really is'. So for me I've got no problems with barefoot Africans or whatever. It is the way they utilise those sorts of images and how they see it. They are not looking at it like 'why should this person in the village be going round walking in Gucci suit and expensive shoes'. What sense does that make? They are looking at it like 'oh this is underprivileged, under-whatever individual'. (Kwaaley, aged 38, Manager)³

¹ Third World countries tended to be seen as a homogeneous block despite their vast cultural, regional, political, and ideological differences. Politically they tended to be considered primarily in terms of their deviance from Western parliamentary democracies, and hence, as undemocratic.

² Date interviewed: 9-12-2006

³ Third interview, date: 16-3-2008

Opinions may vary but there was unanimity on the perceived negative focus of the western media on Africa.

A few news items about Ghana made it fleetingly through the main news on BBC and ITV during the period of study. Ghana was named among a long list of countries to benefit from debt relief announced at the G8 summit in Gleneagles in July 2005. But this was overshadowed by London winning the bid to host the 2012 Olympics, and more significantly by the 7/7 terrorist attacks in London, all within the same week in July 2005. The news of debt relief was supposed to be good news, but for a few members of the main Ghanaian opposition party at the time, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), who were actively involved in politics in Ghana while domiciled in the UK, it had a bitter-sweet element. The calculation was that the unexpected assistance to the Ghanaian economy through debt relief would eventually work to the advantage of the incumbent administration, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government, and could have a knock-on boost to the chances of the ruling party retaining power at the next elections in Ghana. So what was supposed to be good news was tinged with a bitter aftertaste in terms of a potential setback to some political ambitions of the opposition NDC. This also reflected how global events can have unintended or unforeseen 'sweet and sour' implications in certain local contexts.

The few news features about Ghana on mainstream channels were selected for their newsworthiness from the point of view of the Western media. In the instances when Ghana made it into the mainstream news, they were either beneficiaries of Western largesse or the news was about problems facing the country. But the selection of particular types of news events was bound to create distortions in the representations produced of peoples and places. Audiences of mainstream news channels in Britain and elsewhere may not obtain a different perspective or a broader picture, and their views would be informed by what was presented.

Besides, the juxtapositions of Western affluence with Third World poverty, self-sufficiency with dependency, and the donor/ recipient relationship, among other contrasts, were implicit in the news about developing countries like Ghana¹. This

¹ Confirms Van Dijk's (1988; 1988b) suggestion that events involving outgroups are newsworthy if they fit the frames of the dominant ingroup.

bifurcated view of the world reflected by the Western media may be considered in the same vein as what Said critiqued in 'Orientalism' – the Western representations of the 'Other'. However, the tendency to define themselves through antithetical representations of outgroups is not a Western monopoly or peculiarity. But it was consequential, as power was reproduced in the representations. Whole groups of people were categorised in ways that influenced attitudes and defined relations at political, economic, and social levels. The remarks of respondent Kwaaley (quoted earlier) drew on the Western media's interest in Barack Obama's background and ancestry in Kenya to suggest that there might be racial undertones and hierarchical notions involved in such reporting.

Whereas in the past the 'others' were geographically distant, now they were part of the news audiences. For the Ghanaians the antithetical representations and their frequent reiteration in the media grated uncomfortably with their sense of self and had the potential to be disempowering. Since the ideologies of news production were imperceptible to audiences, the news was often taken at face value and some may see themselves as represented, and to subconsciously internalise notions held about them.

Children born to Ghanaian parents in England were often pleasantly surprised when they visited Ghana for the first time, and realised that it was unlike what they had been led to imagine. Downtown may be less than impressive, and difference between the Ghanaian and UK economies was evident. But uptown, things were much more impressive and they came away with a more balanced picture, and they spoke about a more relaxed and peaceful atmosphere overall. Their first hand experience provided an authoritative basis on which to critique the western media:

Kwartei, boy, aged 15)¹

Most of the programmes on Africa show the poor parts of Africa, but they don't show the houses, the beaches, the shops (the good bits). If it's hunger it's mostly Africa. If it's good it's about this country (Britain) and not about Africa... Most of the people who think Africa is like that, they haven't seen the great parts. So they all think bad of it.

Naadu, girl, aged 12)²

They describe Africa like Africa is a bad place and Africa is not good and stuff but if they go and see it for themselves, Africa is a really nice place to be, but they are saying it on the telly...they haven't even been there before, so why are they saying that people are like... And they are always saying send

¹ Extract from group interview recorded 7-1-2007 at Turnpike Lane, North London.

² Streatham Hill Family, Date:6-4-2006

money to Africa because Africa is poor. I agree some part of Africa is poor but not every part of Africa is poor. And they think that most of the diseases are coming from Africa and stuff. It makes me angry because I know that Africa is not like that

Perhaps more compelling was the experience recounted at the *Thornton Heath Family* home where the father recalled an episode which occurred decades earlier when he took his young children to Ghana for the first time. As their plane was about to touch down and sights from the ground could be glimpsed, he overheard his young children, surprised by the sight of buildings and lights on the ground, pointing and exclaiming “look, lights ... houses”. Apparently they had imagined little other than bush. Needless to say that ideologically influenced (mis)representation of people and places by news producers create distortions in the worldviews of their audiences.

However, with the proliferation of channels in recent times alternative perspectives are being made available on various platforms and niche outlets. Respondents indicated that they obtained Ghana news more regularly from a variety of sources including satellite channels such as OBE TV, Rainbow channel, Al-Jazeera (English), Digital FM voice-only channels such as *Hot Digital* (on Sky channel 0212), FM radio stations, the internet, especially Ghanaweb, All Africa.com, Ghanaian newspapers, and from telephone conversation.

Most of the older generation were usually much more interested in news from the homeland than their children. When respondents were asked about the sources from which they obtained news from Ghana and why it was important to them, there were some interesting responses:

Mr. Nti

I never want to lose touch with where I come from. I often watch news of African events, including news about Ghana, on OBE and Al-Jazeera in the evenings. Apart from that every morning or before I go to bed, I also go on the internet to Ghanaweb and read details of news coming from Ghana. Al-Jazeera offers more African news than the other TV stations at my disposal. I find them straightforward and impartial. They say it as they see it, and most of the news items come from their correspondents on the spot, which makes you believe what they are saying. (Kwame Nti, ex-tutor, aged 59)¹

Ms. Ardee:

Personally I don't feel this (UK) is my home although I've been here for the good part of my adult life. I still see Ghana as home. I follow the news to

¹ Date interviewed: 28-1-2007

know what changes are going on back home and to prepare myself for going home. I visit home regularly. (Ms. Ardee, nurse & mother, aged 51)¹

Auntie Dei:

I sometimes go to Ghanaweb. Sometimes I like to follow news from Ghana especially when it concerns the country's economy or if it concerns someone I know, I like to follow up and see what happens. There are now voice-only digital FM stations on Sky TV featuring Ghanaian programmes in Ghanaian languages like Twi and Ga. They give you the latest news and they discuss current issues including chieftaincy disputes and do interviews and debates. Participants phone in from as far as Oklahoma in the US and other places. But sometimes the discussions are not constructive or productive enough. (Auntie Dei, Civil Servant & grandmother, aged 60)²

Auntie Dei's mention of the FM station refers to *Hot Digital* (on Sky), which features Ghanaian programmes such as the magazine show for the Ga-Dangme community, a digital phone-in programme that attracts callers from as far as Oklahoma and other places in the US and Europe, drawn by their common interest in developments in the homeland. This draws attention to the transnational diasporic audience network around such programmes. The interactive phone-in service provided a forum for discussion of pertinent issues regarding the homeland led by an informed expert on a particular issue and followed by debates and contributions from the participants, dispersed across countries and continents. Callers may agree or disagree over issues on-air, and the discussions may not always meet the expectations of the audience, but such programmes served as a focal point around which their common interests in the homeland, aspirations, and the welfare of their kith and kin 'back home' united them as they realised the fledgling transnational dimensions of their diasporic identity. Again this may be considered in the light of Roger Rouse's concept as exemplifying a people with a common identity dispersed across a variety of fields.

News about Ghana kept them abreast with events in the homeland where aspects of their lives still remained in the form of second homes, business interests, and family relations. Some visited regularly and they looked forward to returning home eventually. The news therefore sustained a diasporic imagination and mindset that was often preoccupied with interests and concerns about the homeland. The same may be said of their interest in news about Africa in general as a home continent. All of

¹ Date interviewed: 16-12-2006

² Date interviewed: 26-12-2006

which underline the strength of attachment to home places which the phenomenological geographer Edward Relph also observed:

There is for virtually everyone a deep association with and consciousness of the places where we were born and grew up, where we live now, or where we have had particularly moving experiences. This association seems to constitute a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world (Relph, 1976: 43).

For Ghanaians in London the deep consciousness of their place of origin and the sense of orientation and identity associated with it were linked to their interests in its welfare, creating a desire for regular information which the news provided.

9.9: Summary and Conclusions

Making sense of the world: News was a means of knowing about selected events as they happened and of understanding the world as presented through the media. The news informed their opinions and promoted an understanding of the social, political and economic systems in which their lives were embedded. It enabled them to function as citizens, participate in prevailing discourses, and adopt rational positions on various local and global issues. Knowledge of happenings elsewhere enabled the subjects to gain perspectives on the world and to put their own experiences into context. Their sense of good fortune or disadvantage was relative to the situation of others. News enabled the subjects to see a bigger picture of the world as a whole and of their place in it.

Imagining identities: News informed their opinions and positions on various issues, their world view and their sense of place in the world, and how they related to others. By reporting on events involving peoples, places, and differences, news fed into the consciousness of 'self' and 'other' identities. The Ghanaian subjects' sense of identity was impacted by the way they were featured on the news, which was also a reflection of others' perceptions of them as Africans or Blacks. Their knowledge of others was also constructed with media stereotypes and commonsense observation.

Positioning by events: News of natural disasters, like the 2004 Boxing Day Asian tsunami, tended to evoke sympathy and elevate the welfare of common humanity over parochial imaginings of identity. However, violence due to human agency, particularly when perpetrated in the name of a group, like the attacks of 7/7, provoked outrage and often mobilised identities around antagonism. In both situations

Ghanaians were caught up in events with a global resonance which required a reaction and positioning, which in turn defined their location within transnational configurations of identity. Young Ghanaians also learned to locate themselves within multiple frames of reference and to negotiate their identities from context to context. This process was accelerated by dramatic events such as conflict and terrorism that often involved the taking of positions and having opinions, however rudimentary, which often left them with unresolved ambiguities.

Global citizenship: News from around the world brought awareness of disparities in living conditions and knowledge of disaster and suffering elsewhere which prompted charitable responses from the subjects. In these instances of mediated engagement with distant peoples, otherness was subsumed to the higher purpose of catering to the needs of others whom they may never meet, even from their own modest economic circumstances, focussing on the unity of humanity rather than difference and conflictual imaginations of identity. Their charitable responses to crises elsewhere suggested aspirations towards more inclusive and egalitarian possibilities of imagining 'self' and 'other' relationships, a sense of global citizenship transcending the narrow considerations of ethnicity or nationality. The understanding of the world as one also engendered a sense of shared environmental responsibility

Consequences of crime news: The sense of fear and danger induced by bad news accentuated a mistrust of strangers. For the older generation of Ghanaians, the communalism they were used to seemed absent by comparison to the individualism they encountered in London, and the fear of crime accentuated the insular attitudes. News of youth crime, particularly, knife and gun crime, often focussed the critical gaze of the public and the media on the youth. Many young respondents were afraid of street crime, but also felt criminalised by association with the spectre of youth anti-social behaviour as well as references to 'black crime'. From their point of view, the negative labelling which tarred them with the same broad brush strokes contrasted with the dignity accorded them in Ghana as Ghanaians domiciled abroad, and their fear of crime also contrasted with the sense of security they enjoyed on holidays in Ghana, where they felt that neither their youth nor colour was criminalised. This was a source of comfort as well as pride in their Ghanaian identity.

Prompt for talk: News had a socialising function as a prompt for talk, and spiced up conversation in various situations. The issues talked about also show how the media focus people's attention on particular selected events. There was an understanding of geopolitics, of people groups, and of the world as a whole and of the subjects' place in it. Through collective processes of TV news reception, cultural values were discussed, collective identities were negotiated and aspirations towards change expressed.

Bifurcated view of the world: Western news reports from Africa on the mainstream channels focussed on 'negative' events. The purposefully selected news items and enduring images were often produced from perspectives that juxtaposed Western affluence, self-sufficiency, and donor status with Third World destitution and dependency¹. In the instances when Ghana made it into the mainstream news they either had difficulties or were beneficiaries of Western largesse. This bifurcated view of the world may be considered in the same vein as what Said critiqued in 'Orientalism', or Western representations of the 'Other', which involved a reproduction of power, as whole groups of people were categorised in ways that influenced attitudes and defined international relations at various levels. For the Ghanaians the antithetical and disempowering representations grated uncomfortably with their sense of self. But the proliferation of satellite/ digital niche channels and the internet provided them with opportunities for self- representation, and regular flow of news from Ghana (and Africa), as well as other perspectives on Africa and the rest of the world, that differed from the dominant Western perspectives.

Intergenerational disparity in interest in homeland news - a 'barometer':

Interest in news from Ghana was split across the generational divide. The younger generation had little interest in news in general and little or no interest at all in Ghana news. But most of the older subjects were keen to know about what was going on for various reasons. The foremost reason offered for following news from Ghana was that it was their homeland and that they looked forward to returning someday, or had business and other interests there. Most of the young people, while they enjoyed their holidays there, admitted that they would not like to live there, often because their friends and family were in the UK, and so they were less interested in news from

¹ Confirms Van Dijk's (1988; 1988b) suggestion that events involving outgroups are newsworthy if they fit the frames of the dominant ingroup.

Ghana. The degree of interest in news from Ghana, therefore, roughly reflected the strength of the sense of attachment to Ghana as their ultimate home and that feeling was not as strong in the younger generation as it was in the older generation.

Gender-related power differentials: Essentially, news-led debates about divorce settlements reflected how Ghanaians in the UK were coming to terms with gender power struggles and the friction between ‘girl power’ and patriarchal dominance prevalent among Ghanaians. The power of traditional authority in Ghanaian society may have been usurped by modern institutions, but traditional influences were still strong and so was male dominance in some respects. In England, in matters of marriage and divorce, Ghanaian women realised a shift in the balance of power between spouses in their favour. Women were perceived to profit from marital separation and some of them were thought to exploit this advantage over men, thereby rendering relationships less stable than they would otherwise have been. Such episodes reflect the social changes among Ghanaians resulting from relocation and the accelerated departure from their traditional systems. This shows how news-talk as a discursive practice provided cues to a critical comparative appraisal of cultural models relating to their lives and perspectives on the impact of social change on their collective identity.

News reception and processing therefore involved the negotiation of collective identities, a critical appraisal of cultural differences and values and of the social impact of relocation to another dynamic and different socio-cultural environment. Aspects of their culture, already a synthesis of modern and traditional elements, were challenged by alternative models and either validated or jettisoned as a result, or combined with the new in a process of hybridisation.

CHAPTER TEN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The overarching objective of this study was to capture the essence of the Ghanaian presence in London as a diasporic formation, and to explore the overall outcomes of their situational and mediated cultural encounters and experiences, and consider the inter-generational differences that emerge as a reflection of influences due to the socio-cultural environments in which the formative years of the older and younger generations were experienced (in Ghana & in Britain), and how these factored into processes of negotiation or indicated trends. The qualitative methodological approach to this task allowed for the emergence of a living portrait of the Ghanaian community in London from samples of their own self-narrated perspectives on a range of issues and experiences, supplemented by observations, and the articulation of their sense of identity vis-à-vis other cultural identities. The analysis crystallised around uses of television, mediation, cultural transmissions, negotiations, and issues of identity¹. The findings are shown to address the research questions² (outlined in chapter 1:3), and the hypotheses³ (in chapter 1:4) are affirmed by the research outcomes.

¹ Portrait of the *Ghanaian presence* in London (UK), issues of *identity* and otherness, *mediated* cultural and knowledge experiences, *negotiations* through cultural consumption, and the *intergeneration* differences involved, are all addressed

² **Addressing the Research Questions as outlined in chapter 1.3:**

- Issues around the sense of identity of Ghanaian-Londoners are discussed in *chapter 5* as a complex of context-bound relational identities operated on principles of difference and similarity;
- The defining features of the Ghanaian diasporic community in London are outlined in *chapter 6*;
- The appropriation of the cultural resources offered by television and the difference which that is making to patterns of identification across the intergenerational divide; and the implications of television 'consumption' for processes of cultural negotiation among Ghanaians in London, are addressed in *chapters 7, 8, & 9*, as forms of mediated experience.

³ **Hypotheses affirmed (reference - chapter 1:4):**

- Despite tendencies towards global cultural homogenization engendered by globalization, the Ghanaian diaspora offers an example of resistance, syncretisation, and negotiated cultural diversity
- Difference, dual-nationality and a diasporic orientation rather than assimilation, as exemplified in the identity of Ghanaian-Londoners, are a realisation of the idea of a pluralistic conception of nationality that diasporas open up in the nation-state system.
- Through the use of niche and new media channels, the subjects demonstrate that despite the lack of representation of minority communities in the mainstream media they are able to creatively utilise alternative media resources in the construction and maintenance of their identity in virtual anonymity.
- This also affirms the notion that media are implicated in the construction and reinforcement of identities. Also that the global media are implicated in modern Diasporic formations
- The Ghanaian diasporic presence signals change in the world that is changing them. They also, jointly with other Black diasporans, represent the racial 'other' in the self-imagining of the host 'white' society. Their presence renders race-related definitions of society obsolete or problematic.

10.1: Perspectives on Blackness:

Cultures do not belong to particular groups of people and this makes the racial labelling of cultures problematic. Nevertheless notions of 'black culture' persist and provide a trope for describing cultural expressions associated with 'Black' people. A canonical imagination of blackness was parochially constructed around the creative expressions of 'black' people in the Atlantic diaspora who were within, or in close proximity to, the Euro-American world, which did not take account of black expressions from Africa and elsewhere. Ghanaian cultural attributes, traditions, and performances, reintroduced into the informal spaces they created to establish their presence in London, (including ceremonies, festivals, and customs, detailed in chapter six), were a visible example of 'black' diversity, and challenge the narrow and anachronistic imagination of blackness to which they are usually consigned. Their cultural presence was also consolidated by trans-generational transmissions of their heritage, including artistic expression, social mores and etiquette, both informal and organised. Their distinctive presence reflects and adds to the diasporic reassembling of different groups of black people with common origins in West Africa in particular, who, after diverging along different historical and cultural trajectories, re-converge at the centre of the imperial metropolis with dynamic mutations in their common black identity to form a kaleidoscope of blackness in Britain. Common origins, similarities and differences, have some relevance for the nature-versus-nurture debate as it shows the transforming potential of cultural dynamism to produce difference out of sameness, and the tenacious survival of common traits in people despite their dispersals over time (see chapters four and five). In the circumstances of flux, complexity, and blending, 'Black British culture', as the lived experience of black people in Britain, is shown to be plural, multi-faceted and dynamic, taking on new meanings and defying parochial definitions and monolithic assumptions foisted on it. The Ghanaian presence in Britain reflects that rich diversity of 'black cultures' and their on-going multi-resourced mutation.

Furthermore, these processes are occurring within the environment of a dominant Western (White) culture, itself a historical assemblage with tributaries from multiple sources. This highlights the fact that cultures do not develop in isolation, and do not belong to specific groups. They emanate from, and may have their centres of concentration among identifiable groups, but are open-ended processes of constant

mutation and mimetic appropriations across supposed boundaries; the product of perpetual hybridity and impurity. Influences on 'Ghanaian multicultural', as the study shows, are not confined to 'black culture' or 'white culture' and attention is drawn to confluences, indigenous and foreign, black and white, that feed into the structures of feeling and complex cultural constitution and proclivities of the subjects reflecting in their multi-faceted identities.

10.2: Perspectives on mediated experiences and engagements:

These were derived from screen appropriations of Soaps, Sitcoms, African drama, and News, as forms of mediated experience and knowledge. Consciousness of 'race' as a factor of dwelling in race-conscious Britain meant that the subjects' onscreen appropriation was characterised by a critical review of representations of blackness. The critical observations and attitudes were most apparent in their reception of news and soap dramas, programmes which dealt with blackness from predominantly 'white' perspectives and were often mired in stereotypes which the respondents criticised and repudiated. African-American sitcoms were better received in this regard probably because, apart from the humour, they were less encumbered by stereotypes, were uninhibited by issues of racial representation and reflected black aspirations and ambitions. Like African programmes, they reflect the empowerment and freedom that derives from self-representation.

African drama is useful as a cultural resource that enables the homeland-born generation to reconnect with their origins and to relive African culture. The younger British-born generations are also enriched and informed through African drama and music which connects them to their parents' culture and serves as another resource to their complex identity. The morality tales provide more traditional perspectives on morality to younger viewers growing up in the midst of messages of moral relativism. The critiques of African programmes reflect the subjects' familiarity with Hollywood standards and the general experience of Western cultural consumption, but also reveal frustrations about African productions not catching up fast enough with the West.

Soaps and sitcoms presented various representations, which, despite the stereotypes involved, provided alternative models of social relations and had didactic potential

particularly in the context of cross-cultural consumption, and prompted evaluations and comparisons with the subjects' own heritage, with negotiated outcomes. For the subjects, British soaps and sitcoms provided a window on aspects of Western culture and society. Black American sitcoms reflected a cultural synthesis which contributed to their understanding of contemporary 'Black America'.

Cumulatively, screen fiction, constructed around characters and situations that viewers could relate to, often presented imaginatively created contexts in which life issues were worked out. Although these were inventions, in some instances they provided models of alternative possibilities, especially for the young subjects watching sitcoms that projected a life of fun and laughter, far removed from the everyday realities of pain, difficulty, and misfortune. Soap dramas and sitcoms also presented models of interaction among family members that showed how others (characters) behaved or coped with issues in given circumstances. While these were viewed critically, they nevertheless presented scenarios that viewers could relate to, and were therefore influential. The curtain between on-screen fiction and lived experience becomes a permeable membrane that allows osmosis of ideas and alternative possibilities of fulfilments, real and imagined. These fed into the aspirations of young people in particular, who, though they enjoyed freedoms and comforts that their parents may not have had in their time as youngsters, sometimes expressed a desire for yet more freedoms. Their parents, likewise, observed the models of family relationships, among other screen depictions, and in the general social and cultural environment in which they lived - observations that factored into processes of negotiation. The consequent transformations arguably produced differences between them and their kindred in the homeland. Of Ghanaian-Londoners it may be said that they were the same as their kindred in Ghana, and yet different from them in certain respects, and not quite like the people they now live amongst. This in-between condition is described in terms of hybridism (discussed in chapter three).

News programmes informed the subjects on local and global issues and events, promoted their understanding of the social, political and economic systems in which their lives were embedded, and enabled them to make decisions, function as citizens, form opinions, participate in prevailing discourses, and adopt rational positions on

local and global issues. Moreover, news about events, peoples, places, and particularly, conflicts and terrorism, fed into the consciousness of ‘self’ and ‘other’ identities. But in the instances of mediated engagement with needy people, the subjects’ statements of empathy, and charitable responses from their modest economic circumstances, suggested instincts and aspirations towards inclusive and non-conflictual imaginings of ‘self’ and ‘other’ relationships; a sense of global citizenship transcending the narrow considerations of ethnicity, nationality or other differences. Thus the view of the world as a shared global space with common threats and misfortunes engendered a sense of shared concerns where differences were subsumed to the greater good of common humanity and the health of the environment as a common life sustaining resource. News, therefore, enabled the subjects to make sense of the world and to gain perspectives on its peoples and events, and to understand the world as a global commune of political, economic and socio-cultural configurations in relations of power, competition and cooperation, and of their place in its complexity.

10.3: Perspectives on cultural expression and consumption:¹

Ghanaian-Londoners’ consumption activities cast them as autonomous actors with choice in a consumer society driven by socio-economic logics. But they were also subject to the opposite dynamic of trend-consciousness which worked as a powerful mechanism of social integration, whether the axis was popular culture or Ghanaian culture. Young people in particular, and adults to a lesser degree, were open to the influences of popular culture, judging by their tastes in music and fashion accessories. When drawn on their attitudes to prevailing trends in fashion, the common refrain of respondents, young and old alike, was the protestation “I don’t follow fashion”, as a mark of their originality in taste and style. And yet a sense of their respect for prevailing canons of taste and style and degrees of acquiescence or aspirations towards such popular trends, could also be discerned, read from their responses, and witnessed in their appearance. The outcome of the tension between choice and the

¹ Consumption contains two seemingly opposing logics: *individualism* vs. *collectivism*

- Endorsement of individualism and freedom of choice
- A collectivising dynamic which pits the self against social canons of taste and style. Individual choice is constrained within the limits of what is available in the market and the dictates of fashion, and by the willing acquiescence to that tyranny. This suggests that much of consumption is actually collectivism masquerading as individualism

collectivising logic of being trendy was that Ghanaian-Londoners reworked their distinctive personal preferences and collective attributes to blend in as well as stand out according to different social contexts. Their eclectic tastes in music, food, and clothing styles, among other things, reflected combinations, mixtures and hybridism.

From their location in London, they symbolically consume the world; its popular cultures, screen cultures, ideologies, images, messages and cuisines, and are being transformed in the process. From another perspective this may also be interpreted as the world consuming them through their integration into macro global processes and systems, particularly global mass cultures with their homogenising tendencies, from which there seems to be no immediate prospect of escape. But their sense of self-determination, various acts of resistance, and their distinctive identity, counter the fatalistic notion of being consumed by an omnivorous global culture.

From this study, a composite sketch emerges of a people, geographically located in London, whose make up is complexly inscribed by history, the experience of migration, multi-stranded relations with others, and various anchors to their dynamic identity. The Ghanaian diaspora in London may serve as an example of how ethnicities are redefined and constructed in new contexts, and how people negotiate their identities in the post-modern world.

10.4: Significance of the study and contribution to knowledge:

This study is a product of its time – the era of increased mobility of peoples and cultures and the significance and proliferation of mediation facilitated by innovations in communication technologies, with further implications for cultures. It therefore has a timely relevance, adding to insights into current processes among diasporans in popular migration destinations in Western ‘world cities’ such as London - multicultural cauldrons and sites of transculturation. It highlights the continuing struggles against hegemonic orders and their impact on identities at close quarters; issues of race, representation, minoritization, integration, blending, and hybridisation; the contestations over cultural spaces and ideologies; the ambivalences involved in dual national allegiances; the gravitational orientations linked to ‘place-bonding’ and ‘place-identity’; the multi-stranded relations across imaginary boundaries, among other things. These processes and encounters are not novel or peculiar to the Ghanaian

experience, but the particularity of the Ghanaian context of engagement with such processes and issues confers a uniqueness on the study and its findings. The additional insights gained are applicable to other contexts of experience in a world of proliferating diasporic formations and mediation.

More significantly, the study provides empirically validated perspectives on blackness. Against the apparent monolithic imaginings of blackness projected in social and media discourses, the thesis spotlights the distinctiveness of the Ghanaian diaspora to underscore black diversity. Importantly, it draws attention to a lacuna in academic focus and literary discourses on blackness. The literature on the black diaspora and blackness in general, copious as it is, reflects a popular preoccupation with the 'Black Atlantic' diaspora formations at the expense of other black experiences, formations, and expressions, overlooked or relegated to the margins of scholarly interest. This thesis, while it draws attention to the perceived imbalance in focus and representations, does not claim to redress this at once, or fill the gulf, but utilises the opportunity to make a modest but original contribution to knowledge with this critically evaluated documentary of features of the Ghanaian diaspora in London. This refreshing glimpse into the world of Ghanaian-Londoners confers a measure of academic conspicuity to their otherwise low-key but noticeable presence, where their expressions have been relatively inaudible in the cacophony of more strident voices, often with transnational clout, vehemently vying for attention over political, religious, ethnic, national, ecological and other contemporary issues and demands in the multicultural spaces and politics of London. Currently, available information in the public domain, or the lack of it, indicates that there is no known similar, parallel, or duplicate study with the same theme, substance, focus, and approach as this particular project. In this lies its originality with the potential to inspire other works of this nature.

10.5: Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research:

The sample on which the study was based was adequate for the purposes and the constraints of time on the research. Indeed the qualitative nature of the study generated copious amounts of data. Consideration was given to the danger of data overload and the knock-on effect that might have on the outcome of the study. Given a different set of circumstances, perhaps, the purview of the field of enquiry and the

sample could have been enlarged to include other viable areas of further exploration, which in this case did not fit within the prescribed limits.

A surprising discovery of this study was the realisation that computers, interactivity and user-generated material engaged young people's interest perhaps to a greater degree than the ready-made content that television offers. The implications of this trend call for further exploration. Besides, the ambition to include a more comprehensive assessment of the local impact of global consumer advertising had to be curbed for the reasons stated. Furthermore, a detailed examination of the subjects' responses to lifestyle programmes also had to be put on hold. Indeed the impact of digitization and the proliferation of new channels have seen lifestyle formats hosted across a multitude of platforms, inviting audience engagement on a number of levels. Such programmes cover subjects as diverse as cooking, gardening, home and body makeovers, nutrition, education and parenting. Expert advice and counselling are offered on a range of matters including diet, health and fitness. The cumulative result is the information glut in the public domain about matters relating to the body as a canvass on which cultural tastes and attributes are impressed, and the home as a cultural habitat inscribed by various ideologies and concepts. Further exploration holds prospects for a greater understanding of the cross-cultural potential and implications of lifestyle television in diasporic and other contexts.

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APPENDIX 'A'

OVERVIEW OF STUDY SUBJECTS & FAMILY/ HOUSEHOLD PROFILES

The Subjects of the Study

The subjects of the study were Ghanaians resident in London. They were drawn from, but not restricted to the Ghanaian families or households recruited for the exercise. Apart from families and individual interviewees, Ghanaian-Londoners in general, their activities and gatherings were all considered study subjects.

THE WALWORTH FAMILY

The family lived in South London.

*Father Ankrah, aged 46, a businessman, was the only member of the family to have been born in Ghana, but had lived in Britain since the mid-1980s. He had experience of working in the manufacturing industry. He sometimes travelled to Ghana on business, maintaining a presence in both places simultaneously. He usually controlled the choice of programmes when he was around.

*Mother, Mrs. Ankrah aged 43 (also Ghanaian) a civil servant, was born in England but grew up in Ghana before returning to England in the mid-1980s.

*All 4 children were born in England: Mark aged 18, his brother Fred aged 15, their sister Anita aged 10, and the youngest, Ron, 16 months old. The children all had access to computers and other gadgets. They spent more time on computers than on television.

Dates & duration of visits:

(1) Date: 4-10-2005, Time: 6pm- 9pm; (2) Date: 3-12-05, Time: 5.30pm – 9.30pm,
(3) Date: 22-7-06, Time: 5 pm - 8pm, (4) Date: 3-10-06, Time: 5pm – 7pm,
(5) Date: 8-10-06, Time: 3pm-5pm

Interview dates:

*Children: 8-10-2006 (3-5pm)

*Parents: 9-12-2006 (6-9pm)

Occasional informal visits continued in 2007 & 2008

THE TOTTENHAM GREEN FAMILY

*Husband, aged 58 had been in Britain for about 30 years and lived and worked elsewhere in England, but visited the family occasionally.

*Mother Bertha, aged 54, had lived in London for 30 years, worked with the Local Council and spent weekends away with her husband outside London.

*Sons Duah 19, Ken 17, and Tom, 12 all born in London and their cousins Baba (10), Musa aged 19 and Darren aged 20 lived together creating a lively atmosphere. All were in full time education. As in other cases, the boys were more into computers than television. As individuals in this household, they were very mobile with different schedules, including school and work commitments

*Mother Bertha's younger sister (the children's aunt) Tina aged 39, a care home worker, with her 10 year old son Baba (born in London), lived with the family for a while before moving out. She had lived in London for 18 years

Dates & duration of visits:

(1) Date: 5-3-06, Time: 1pm – 4pm (2) Date: 7-5-06, Time: 1pm – 5pm
3). Date: 28-7-06 Time: 6.45pm – 8.30pm (4) Date: 23-9-06 Time: 12 – 1.30pm
5). Date: 30-9-06, Time: 6pm-8pm (6) Date: 7-10-06, Time: 5 pm – 8.15pm
Interview date: 30-9-2006 (6-8pm)

THE STREATHAM HILL FAMILY

All the members of the family were born and raised in Ghana, and spoke English very well with Ghanaian accents. Both parents were occupied with studies and work commitments.

*Father Asare, aged 42 had a background in management, administration and politics. He arrived in London in year 2000 as mature post-graduate student. He worked as a part-time college lecturer.

*Wife, Cynthia, aged 37, joined her husband in 2002 and worked in customer services at a leading supermarket while studying part-time.

*Children: Nat, aged 14, Naadu (girl) aged 12, and 6 year old Sam, were all schooling. Television brought the family together. The mother usually controlled programme selection. Viewing was sometimes planned and a TV programme guide was usually available and often checked for programme listings.

Dates & duration of visits:

1). Date: 13-9-05, Time: 5pm-8.30pm (2). Date: 22-9-05, Time: 6pm – 9pm
3). Date: 28-10-05, Time: 7pm - 9.30pm (4). Date: 6-4-06, Time: 7 – 10pm
5). Date: 20-4-06, Time: 7pm-9.25pm (6). Date: 31-8-06, Time: 6.30pm -11pm
(7) Date: 29-5-06, Time: 6pm – 9pm (8). Dates: 1-9-06 to 7-9-06

Other activities:

*Date: 6-8-05 (Sat) Time: 12 noon – 7pm

Activity: Day trip to Ghanaian outdoor cultural event outside London.

*Date: 2-10-05, Time: 5pm – 9.30pm

Activity: Musical Concert at Hammersmith Apollo featuring groups from the US and UK with performances in contemporary dance routines and Gospel music.

*Date: 18-12-05, Time: 5pm – 9.30pm

Activity: Christmas Concert in West London

*Date: 13-3-06, Time: 1pm – 9pm

Activity: Ghanaian engagement ceremony in West London

*Date: 1-7-06, Time: 12.15pm – 11pm

Activity: Ghanaian wedding in West London

WHITE HART LANE FAMILY

Both parents were born and raised in Ghana. All the children were born in England

*Father, Yaw, aged 48, spent more time in Ghana looking after his businesses. On his periodic visits to London, he worked as a cab driver. The rest of the family lived in London.

*Mother, Angela, aged 44, worked at a factory.

*Children: Danny the eldest son aged 18, his brother Colin 16, and their sister Nicola 15, were all in full time education. Each had a bedroom TV set. The main TV set was in the living room. They also had access to computers and Games consoles.

Dates & duration of visits:

1. Date: 10-2-06 Time: 5pm – 7.30pm (2). Date: 12-3-06 Time: 1pm – 4pm
3. Date: 5-5-06 Time: 5pm- 8pm (4). Date: 15-7-06 Time: 2pm – 4.30pm
5. Date: 28-7-06 Time: 4.30- 6pm (6). Date: 30-09-06 Time: 2pm – 4pm

Interview dates: 28-7-2006; 7-10-2006; 24-11-2007

Occasional visits continued after the dates mentioned

Angella, 44, White Hart Lane Family Date of interview:

THE ENFIELD FAMILY

The family lived in a predominantly white English neighbourhood in Enfield North London.

*Father, Mr. Boateng, aged 59 was a civil servant.

*Mother Mrs. Boateng, aged 50, worked for a company.

*Children: Rita (aged 21), Kofi (male, aged 19), both at University, Yaw (schoolboy, aged 15), were all born in England. They could all speak their parents' Ghanaian language, and ate Ghanaian foods, and visited Ghana with their parents occasionally.

Apart from the main TV set in the living room, each person has a private TV set in their bedroom. They maintained that they did not watch much television. They also had computers and internet access.

*The family later moved out of London

Dates & duration of visits:

1. Date: 28-5-06 Time: 4pm – 6pm (2). Date: 23-6-06 Time: 7pm – 9pm
3. Date: 6-8-06 Time: 11am – 2pm (4). Date: 8-10-06 Time: 11am- 1.20pm
Interview date: 8-10-2006 (11am- 1.20pm)

THE OLIVE GROVE FAMILY

Both parents were born in Ghana and moved to London in the mid 1980s but had been separated for a long while and so the father lived elsewhere in London and worked as a cabbie.

*Mother Alice, aged 42 worked shifts with a local company, had little time for television,.

*The children were all in education: Paul aged 18, Abena, female, aged 16, (a part-time hair stylist, plaited hair for friends), Patricia, aged 10, and Katie aged 6. They attended local schools which were as mixed and diverse in terms of the ethnic composition as the neighbourhood in which they lived. Apart from television they also had access to computers and games consoles. They understood but never spoke in their mother tongue. The family visited Ghana periodically.

*Temporarily resident with them was uncle Ben aged 35 (Alice's brother) who served as a father figure for the children.

Dates & duration of visits:

1. Date: 23-9-05 Time: 6.30pm–9.00pm (2). Date: 15-10-05 Time: 5pm – 7.30pm
3. Date: 28-7-06 Time: 5.30pm – 7pm (4). Date: 23-9-06 Time: 1.50pm – 4pm
5. Date: 30-9-06 Time: 4.15pm – 5.40pm (6). Date: 2-10-06 Time: 5.45 – 8pm
Interviews dates: 2-10-2006 (6-8pm); 7-1-2007 (5-8pm)
Social occasions jointly attended included a wedding celebration and a funeral.
Occasional informal visits continued.

THE BLACKHORSE ROAD FAMILY

*Father Mr. Odoi, aged 51 a haulage driver had been in London since 1984

*Wife Mrs Odoi, aged 43 who later became a graduate nurse, joined him in 1987

*Their three children were all born in London: Yaaley, girl aged 16, Daniel aged 14, and Nora aged 7. Family holiday destinations included Ghana, continental Europe and the USA where they had other relatives. They regularly ate Ghanaian dishes at home. Cuisines from other parts of the world were also consumed (Italian, Chinese, English etc.). As with the other families, their neighbourhood as well as schools were ethnically diverse

Dates & duration of visits:

1. Date: 21-8-05 Time: 4pm – 6.30pm (2). Date: 15-10-05 Time: 3.20pm – 7.30pm
3. Date: 19-11-05 Time: 12.30 – 4pm (4). Date: 13-5-06 Time: 3.40 – 7.30pm
5. Date: 17-6-06 Time: 2.50pm – 10.25pm (6). Date: 15-7-06 Time: 5.10pm – 9pm
7. Date: 2-9-06 Time: 4pm – 8.50pm (8). Date: 23-9-06 Time: 4.20 – 8.45pm
9. Date: 27-1-2007
Interview dates: 16-12-2006; 14-1-2007; 27-1-2007
Occasional visits continued in 2007, 2008 and 2009.

THE STREATHAM VALE FAMILY

The family lived in a quiet and very mixed South London neighbourhood among people of various nationalities that included Somalis, Indians, and Jamaicans. There was not much interaction with neighbours, just an awareness of their presence.

*Parents were divorced. Mother, Gladys aged 50, born in England lived elsewhere in London

*Father of 3, Kwapong, aged 50 an accountant, had been in England for about 30 years. He was also the secretary of an association formed by members of his ethnic group in London, *16 year old schoolgirl, Korkor lived with her father. Her older siblings, 22 year old brother and 24 year old sister had flown the nest and lived with their spouses elsewhere in London. Korkor admitted to not being a regular or frequent television viewer. She usually spent more time on the computer enjoyed her visits to Ghana, and would not mind living there. She ate Ghanaian food at home, usually prepared by her father, but was also used to English and other cuisines

Dates & duration of visits:

1. Date: 24-6-2006 Time: 12.45pm-3pm (2) Date: 22-7-2006 Time: 12.30-2.30 pm

3. Date: 25-9-2006 Time: 7pm- 9pm (4). Date: 1-10-2006 Time: 2pm-4.30pm

Interview dates: 1-10-2006; 9-1-2007

Contact maintained after last interview

OLD KENT ROAD FAMILY

The family participated in interviews only.

Parents Mr. Opoku (aged 50) worked as a maintenance supervisor and Mrs. Opoku, 46 was a customer service officer at a leading departmental retail outlet. They had lived in London for over 20 years. They had four children: Ewurama, female university student aged 19, Ato, schoolboy aged 15, (both born in Ghana) Felicia, aged 10 and Alex, boy aged 7 (both born in London).

Interview dates: 19-1- 07; 26-1-2007

THORTON HEATH FAMILY

Father of 4 Niikwei, a civil servant, aged 60 was also a sub-chief of his ethnic group in London. He was joined in his interview by Papa Kojo, aged 59, a close family friend and fellow Ghanaian. Both were well versed in customs and traditions.

Daughters Akweley, lawyer aged 27 and Ago aged 25, administrator, participated in interviews only.

Mother, aged 59, senior brother aged 31 and younger sister aged 20 were unavailable for the interviews due to other engagements

Interview dates:

17-1-2007 (for father Niikoi & and friend Papa Kojo); 18-1-2007 (for the 2 sisters)

TOOTING BROADWAY FAMILY

Husband Papafio (retired, aged 65) and wife auntie Dei, (Civil Servant, aged 60) lived in the quiet mixed neighbourhood in South London. Their children had all flown the nest.

Kwaaley, one of them, a manager, and aged 38, separately provided three interviews.

Auntie Dei provided a couple of interviews, and brief excerpts of Mr. Papafio's views on some political issues (in conversation) are featured in News-talk (chapter 9)

Interview dates:

Auntie Dei – 26-12-2006; 2-10-2007

Kwaaley – 12-12-2006; 29-12-2007; 16-3-2008

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS (ADULTS)

1. Mr. Peprah

Age: 51, father of 1

Occupation: Barrister

Date of Interview: 11-11-2006

Balham, South London

2. Mrs. Quaye

Age: 68, grandmother

Occupation: Pensioner

Date of Interview: 15-12-2006

Surrey Quays, South London

3. Mr. Frank

Age: 33, married father of 2
Occupation: Accounts manager
Date of Interview: 10-2-2007
Stratford, East London

4. Mr. Akwei

Age: 73
Occupation: Pensioner, (married, grandfather)
Date of Interview: 3-1-2007
Ladbroke Grove, West London

5. Reverend Agyemang

Age: 49, married father of 3
Occupation: clergyman
Date of Interview: 26-4-07
Putney, South West London

6. Kweku Nti

Age: 59, married father of 3
Occupation: Administrator (Ex-tutor)
Date of Interview: 28-1-2007
Denmark Hill, South London

7. Mr. Abankwa,

Age: 57, married father of 3
Occupation: lawyer & politician
Date Interviewed: 3-2-2007.
Crystal Palace, South West London

8. Madam Ardee

Age: 51, mother of 2
Occupation: nurse
Date Interviewed: 16-12-2006
Neasden, West London

GROUP INTERVIEWS (YOUTH)

1. Notting hill Gate Group (1)
Date of Interviews: 8-1-2007

2. Notting hill Gate Group (2)
Date of Interviews: 29-4-2007

3. Woodgreen Group
Date of Interview: 7-1-2007

4. Turnpike Lane Group
Date of Interview: 9-2-2007

APPENDIX 'B'

Profile of Ghanaian-Londoners

Profile of those Living in London born in: Ghana

Demography

By sex	Number	%	Total %
Total	46,513		
Male	21,716	46.7	48.4
Female	24,797	53.3	51.6

By sex and age	0-4	5-15	16-24	25-44	45-59	60-64	65-74	75+	All Ages
Total	514	2,193	5,181	23,538	11,652	1,848	1,383	204	46,513
Male	256	1,077	2,442	10,442	5,468	1,029	880	122	21,716
Female	258	1,116	2,739	13,096	6,184	819	503	82	24,797
Percentage by age group	1.1	4.7	11.1	50.6	25.1	4.0	3.0	0.4	100.0
London total	6.7	13.5	12.1	35.3	16.1	3.9	6.5	5.9	100.0

Living arrangements	Number	%	Total %
Living in a couple	19,847	42.9	39.9
Not living in a couple	26,405	57.1	60.1
Lone parent	10,373	22.4	15.0
Living alone	5,921	12.8	14.8

Housing and amenities

Accommodation type	Number	%	Total %
House or bungalow	17,137	36.8	59.6
Flat, maisonette or apartment	28,252	60.7	38.4
Caravan or other temporary structure	34	0.1	0.1
Households in shared accommodation	828	1.8	0.6
Living in communal establishments	261	0.6	1.3

Tenure	Number	%	Total %
Owner occupier*	13,840	29.9	58.4
Council rented	17,466	37.8	16.7
Other social rented	8,657	18.7	8.8
Private rented	5,609	12.1	14.4
Living rent free	679	1.5	1.7

Occupancy rating	Number	%	Total %
0 or more	23,144	50.0	70.7
-1 or less	23,107	50.0	21.3

Central heating	Number	%	Total %
Accommodation with	43,781	94.7	94.1
Accommodation without	2,470	5.3	5.9

People in households with	Number	%	Total %
Access to at least one car	28,536	61.7	70.9
Without access to car	17,716	38.3	29.1

Health

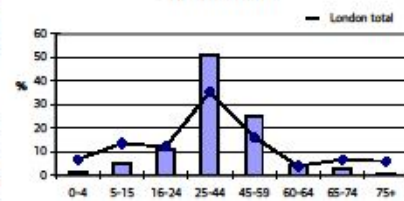
General health	Number	%	Total %
Good health	35,574	76.5	70.8
Fairly good health	8,585	18.5	20.9
Not good health	2,354	5.1	8.3

Limiting long term illness (LLTI)	Number	%	Total %
Has a LLTI	5,098	11.0	15.5
Does not have a LLTI	41,415	89.0	84.5

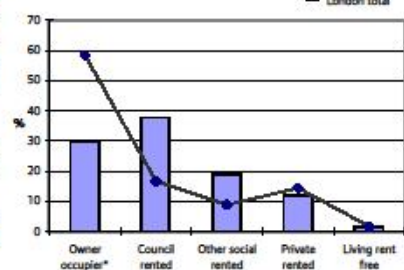
Qualifications (aged 16-74)

Qualifications	Number	%	Total %
No qualifications or level unknown	8,347	19.1	29.2
Lower level qualifications	20,732	47.5	39.8
Higher level qualifications	14,523	33.3	31.0

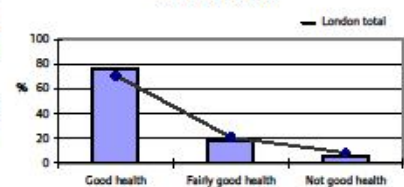
Age structure



Tenure



General health



Source: 2001 Census, Commissioned Table SCT027 (C0116)
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	Number	%	Total %
All persons 16-74	43,602		
Economically active	31,359	71.9	67.6
As a % of economically active			
Employee - full-time	19,287	61.5	63.1
Employee - part-time	4,702	15.0	12.8
Self-employed	1,983	6.3	13.3
Unemployed	2,685	9.2	6.5
Full-time student	2,502	8.0	4.4
Economically inactive	12,243	28.1	32.4
As a % of economically inactive			
Retired	1,792	14.6	30.2
Student	4,046	33.0	20.2
Looking after home or family	2,503	20.4	22.1
Permanently sick or disabled	1,536	12.5	14.1
Other	2,366	19.3	13.4
Students 16-74	6,548	15.0	9.5
Employment Rate 16-74		70.1	66.6
Employment 16-74			
Occupation			
Total	27,890	100.0	100.0
Managers & senior officials A	2,409	8.6	17.6
Professional occupations B	2,666	9.6	14.9
Associate professionals** C	3,782	13.6	17.9
Administrative *** D	3,441	12.3	15.5
Skilled trades occupations E	1,565	5.6	7.7
Personal service occupations F	3,447	12.4	5.9
Sales & customer service occupations G	2,255	8.1	6.7
Process, plant & machine operative H	1,849	6.6	4.9
Elementary occupations J	6,476	23.2	9.0
Industry			
Total	27,885	100.0	100.0
Manufacturing & primary# M	1,675	6.0	8.4
Construction N	535	1.9	5.3
Wholesale & retail trade O	3,980	14.3	14.4
Hotels & restaurants P	1,919	6.9	4.6
Transport; storage & communications Q	3,154	11.3	8.1
Financial intermediation R	923	3.3	8.0
Real estate; renting## T	5,361	19.2	20.3
Public administration### U	1,535	5.5	5.4
Education V	1,560	5.6	7.5
Health & social work W	5,766	20.7	10.1
Other X	1,477	5.3	8.0

* Owner occupier includes with a mortgage and part rent - part buy
 ** Associate professionals & technical occupations
 *** Administrative & secretarial occupations
 # includes agriculture, fishing, mining and utilities
 ## Real estate; renting & business activities
 ### Public administration & defence; social security

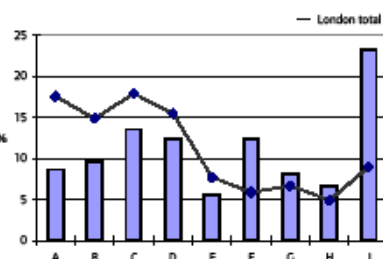
Economic activity by type



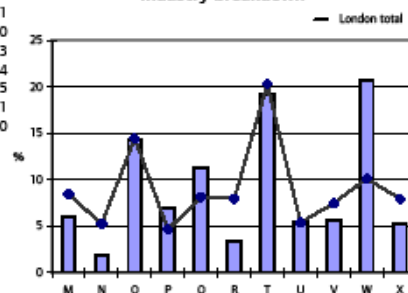
Economic inactivity by type



Occupational breakdown



Industry breakdown



Source: 2001 Census, Commissioned Table SCT021 (C0116)
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Data provided by courtesy of Greater London Assembly (Mayor's publications)

APPENDIX 'C'

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYMS (ABBREVIATIONS)

ANC	African National Congress
ASBO	Anti Social Behaviour Order
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BEN TV	Black Entertainment Network Television
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency of the United States government
EU	European Union
FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation Mozambique
GBC	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People
OBE TV	Original Black Entertainment Television
OAAU	Organisation of Afro-American Unity
OAU	Organisation of African Unity (Now known as African Union)
PSB	Public Service Broadcasting
PNDC	Provisional National Defence Council
R & B	Rhythm and Blues acknowledged as black music
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNIA	Universal Negro Improvement Association (founded by Marcus Garvey)
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific & Cultural Organisation
US/ USA	United States of America
WTO	World Trade Organisation

TERMS

ACCULTURATION is a process in which members of one **cultural** group adopt the beliefs and behaviours of another group. Acculturation is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact; the original cultural patterns of either.

ASSIMILATION (cultural) is a political response to the demographic fact of multi-ethnicity which encourages absorption of the minority into the dominant culture.

COSMOPOLITANISM

‘Cosmopolitan’ is derived from the Greek *kosmos*, meaning world, and *polis*, meaning city, overall meaning citizen of the world; a globally-minded cultural disposition (Tomlinson, 2003: 184-5), or according to Hannerz, ‘a perspective, a state of mind, or...a mode of managing meaning’ (Hannerz, 1990: 238). Cosmopolitanism, as a cultural perspective, is a set of competences, and also ‘a willingness to engage with the ‘Other’. It is an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity’, (Hannerz, 1990: 239), and includes the ability to adapt flexibly to other cultures, and skill in manoeuvring in and between cultures. Tomlinson suggests that the ideal type of cosmopolitan involves a cultural commitment – of belonging to the world as whole, with environmental responsibilities and the absence of otherness. This contrasts with

Hannerz's notion where cosmopolitans are uncommitted and 'know where the exit is' (Hannerz, 1990: 240), which suggests that the notion is a loose description of a cultural ideal. The combination of the increasing mobility of diasporans and the proliferation of communications technologies makes for the cosmopolitan ideal to become a more common experience and a feature of diasporic identity. But, Hannerz argues that the increase in mobility that the globalization process produces does not necessarily engender a cosmopolitan disposition and that most people on the move simply want 'home plus' something. For instance refugees want home plus safety, labour migrants, home plus higher income, and even expatriate employees from the West remain metropolitan locals instead of becoming cosmopolitans (Hannerz, 1990: 241, 245).

John Urry suggests the emergence of a new type of 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism' linked to tourism and anchored in the practices of popular consumer culture. It involves a 'stance of openness towards divergent experiences from different national cultures' and 'a search for and delight in contrasts between societies rather than a longing for uniformity or superiority' (Lash and Urry, 1994: 167). It also involves knowledge competencies, including, a level of semiotic skill in the interpretation of cultural signs.

But his argument is open to criticism regarding the exclusivity of the category; a restricted socio-economic spectrum has access to the experiences he outlines, mostly affluent groups in the West that can afford regular recreational foreign travel. This is linked with another criticism that affluence and mobility provide privileged access to a realm of 'superior' cultural and ethical judgement and the implied denigration of local experience. Implicit in some of the notions of cosmopolitanism is the appearance of the cosmopolitan disposition as the cultural property of the West, or that being a citizen of the world is tied up with western cosmology – the intellectual and ethical 'world-view' of the West. Besides, the dualism that differentiates the cosmopolitan from the local also appears to denigrate the local experience by implication, as parochial, conservative, ill-informed etc, the obverse side of the cosmopolitan (Tomlinson, 2003: 186-9)

Anthony Giddens expresses a reflexive take on the cosmopolitan disposition with the assertion that:

A person may make use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative. Thus a cosmopolitan person is one precisely who draws strength from being at home in a variety of contexts (Giddens, 1992: 190).

It may be deduced from this statement that such a condition can also be attained through mediated experience. Cosmopolitanism through visual travel was a possibility, the local becoming a cosmopolitan without travelling physically. The routine exposure to cultural difference through the use of media technologies can, as Hebdige indicates, enable people to become cosmopolitans in their own living rooms.

We are living in a world where 'mundane cosmopolitanism' is part of 'ordinary' experience. All cultures, however remote temporally and geographically, are becoming accessible today as signs and/ or commodities. If we don't choose to go and visit other cultures they come and visit us as images and information on TV ... Nobody has to be educated, well-off or adventurous to be a world traveller at this level. In the 1990's everybody– willingly or otherwise, whether conscious or not – is more or less cosmopolitan (Hebdige, 1990: 20).

However, there is a counter argument that the phenomenological (experiential) 'distance' involved in the 'quasi-experience' of television viewing makes for emotional and moral detachment, and is different from proximate life-world experience. Such limitations make it implausible that mediated experience would provide a strong enough basis for global 'communities' organized around issues of global moral concern (Hebdige, 1989: 91)

In summary, like other concepts of this nature, cosmopolitanism is not restricted to a fixed meaning. But the central idea is one of trans-cultural competences that come with awareness of, and familiarity with other cultures. It is an ideal that transcends difference and parochialism, but is also embroiled in ambiguity and controversy. Implicit in some of the shades of meaning associated with the idea of cosmopolitanism is the privileging of the global over the local, and also the perception of a cultural elitism that places the West above 'the rest'. It may be argued that the diasporic experience and the possibilities of mediated experience imbue diasporans with a cosmopolitan disposition. But questions remain about what or whose criteria determine that a cosmopolitan disposition has been achieved, considering the ambiguity and the disagreements surrounding the term.

DISCOURSE: Discourse may be defined as a language or system of representation that has developed socially in order to make and circulate a coherent set of meanings about an important topic area. Discourse is generated within sections of society and works ideologically to naturalise those meanings into common sense. Moreover, apart from the production and reading of texts, discourses also function in making sense of social experience (Fiske, 1987: 14-15). It is a means of constructing regimes of truth – archives of knowledge, expertise or codes of representation. Besides, discourses are also considered in terms of power relations (O'Sullivan et al 1983: 74) and as a social act, may promote or oppose the dominant ideology.

Discourse: (summary - Fairclough, 1997:135):

- Discourse: language use conceived as social practice
- Discourse: way of signifying experience from a particular perspective
- Discursive event: instance of language use, analysed as text, discursive practice, social practice
- Text: the written or spoken language produced in a discursive event
- Discourse practice: the production, distribution and consumption of a text
- Interdiscursivity: the constitution of a text from diverse discourses and genres
- Genre: use of language associated with a particular social activity
- Order of discourse: totality of discursive practices of an institution, and relations between them.

ENCULTURATION is the process by which a person learns the requirements of the culture by which he or she is surrounded, and acquires values and behaviours that are appropriate or necessary in that culture.

ETHNICITY: Ethnicity is a slippery term, and has been used in various senses to include nature, culture and nation. It has also been conflated with, contrasted with, or used euphemistically to replace 'race'. 'Racial' traits are seen as natural and unchanging, immutable, and are at the root of behaviour, giving rise to various forms of racial essentialism. But 'race' as a biological means of differentiating between people(s) has been discredited and proven to be misleading and scientifically flawed and spurious (Donald and Rattansi, 1992). Ethnicity is said to connote 'migrancy, minority status, lower class' and of 'hardness of boundaries' (Sollors, 1986: 39, 84). Derived from the Greek 'ethnikos', it was originally applied to cultural strangers, heathens, 'outsiders' and 'others', excluding the dominant group (considered the 'insiders'). The term 'ethnic' has come to mean 'peculiar to race and nation' (Fitzgerald, 1992: 115). Its meaning has continued to slide and change. It may be defined as 'something dynamic ... a matter of finding a voice or a style that does not violate one's several components of identity' (Fischer, 1986: 195). Ethnicity may also be regarded as having the power to affirm identities and facilitate the group mobilization for purposes like cultural revival, renewal, and re-creation (Fitzgerald, 1992; Hall, 1992). But it can also be deployed for negative racist purposes like the 'ethnic cleansing' which occurred in the former

Yugoslavia in the 1990's. The term lends itself to suggestions of collective transformation, of identity that can be constructed (Sollors, 1986: 221).

'Ethnic groups' in conventional discourse, are considered to share a combination of biological attributes of common descent and physical characteristics (body shape, skin pigmentation etc) as well as cultural characteristics, attitudes and behaviours (language, nationality, religion etc) (Smootha, 1989). These act as a basis for a collective differentiation from others. But the term is not restricted to such definitions. As Brass suggests, ethnicity, in addition to objective markers, also involves subjective self consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, a contingent and changeable status (Brass, 1991: 19).

'Ethnicity' is also conflated with national identity, and in that sense it has been connected with the historical forces instrumental in shaping the world's ethnic mosaic, such as colonialism, imperialism, and migration (voluntary or forced, as in the trans-Atlantic slavery). Nationalism, often the expression of ethnic groups' aspirations towards self-determination, has worked to crystallize ethnicity and conflate it with national identity (Smith, 1981), particularly where people of different backgrounds come into contact or share the same institutions or political systems (Smootha, 1989: 267, Brass, 1991). The construction of a unified modern state: 'one nation, one people, one destiny', with inherent implications of unity around culture and ethnicity / 'race', is usually at the expense of minority identities and the exclusion of others, the dominant ethnic group concealing its own ethnic status and attributing ethnicity to 'others'. Critics point to the example of the affirmation of Englishness as the norm over centuries and in contemporary Britain, against those ethnicities which it subordinates and marginalizes (Gilroy, 1987; Hebdige, 1992), which include the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Black British, or the ethnicities of former colonies. Hall argues for the detachment of 'ethnicity' from associations with racism, nationalism, imperialism and the state:

'The term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity, identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, and situated, and all knowledge is contextual ... The fact that this grounding of ethnicity in difference was deployed, in the course of racism, as a means of disavowing the realities of racism and repression does not mean that we can permit the term to be permanently colonized. That appropriation will have to be contested, the term disarticulated from its position in the discourse of 'multiculturalism' and transcoded, just as we had to recuperate the term 'black' from its place in a system of negative equivalences' (Hall, 1992: 257)

Ethnicity may be central to all forms of cultural identity, but is not the only constituent of identity. Other axes of difference include gender, sex, class and region, and these prevent the production of singular positions, as they 'locate only to dislocate one another' rendering identities as a 'field of antagonisms' (Hall, 1993). This plurality of differences strips all forms of cultural and ethnic essentialism and determinism of any basis. Identity, according to Hall, is 'not an essence but a positioning', and identity politics is a politics of position (Hall, 1990: 226). Furthermore that 'identity should be seen as a "production" which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation' (Hall, 1990: 222). The media are instrumental in producing, constructing, defining, contesting, and reconstituting ethnic and other cultural identities

HEGEMONY "leadership" or "hegemon" for "leader") is the political, economic, ideological or cultural power exerted by a dominant group

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: How identities are formed in the simultaneity of relationship between levels of social life and organization of the state, the economy, international media and popular culture, the region, the locale, the transcultural context, ethnographer's world and his subjects all at once.

IDEOLOGY: A set of aims and ideas that directs one's goals, expectations, and actions. An **ideology** can be thought of as a comprehensive vision, as a way of looking at things (compare worldview).

A conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in the manifestations of individual and collective life (Gramsci, quoted in Fairclough, 1997: 76)

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM: Institutional racism as a concept developed in anti-racism discourse and was shaped by the historical context of the struggle of African-Americans against inequality, material deprivation, and exclusionary practices in the United States. The concept and meaning of racism was expanded to include in addition to beliefs, all actions and inaction, individual and institutional, which had the consequence of sustaining or increasing the subordination of black people (Miles, 1989: 51). In the context of the resistance and riots of the 1960's, according to Miles, the publication of the Black Power in 1968, distinguished overt and individual racism from covert and institutional racism which included actions and inactions which maintain black people in a disadvantaged situation and which rely on the active and pervasive operation of anti-black attitudes and practices. They defined racism as '...the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control of that group' (Carmichael and Hamilton quoted in Miles, 1989: 51). This theme is also developed by other writers and the groups referred to are defined as 'black' and 'white' respectively, with white people being the beneficiaries of colour-based power structures, processes and advantage that sustain black disadvantage. Miles argues that the concept of institutional racism has been utilised but not rigorously critiqued, preferring Hall's definition of racism as 'one of the dominant means of ideological representation through which the white fractions of the class come to "live" their relations to other fractions and through them to capital itself (Quoted in Miles, 1989: 65). Hall's analysis of British indigenous racism also examines how the 'black' presence is identified as the 'enemy within', the signifier of the crisis of British society (ibid)

The concept of institutional racism emerged in British discourses on race. In the McPherson Report on the Stephen Lawrence enquiry, the Metropolitan Police were labelled 'institutionally racist' for its conduct of the investigations into the racist murder of the black teenager, thus adopting the prevailing understanding of the term. However, in the British context, the category 'black' refers to a heterogeneous population originating from different historical, colonial and cultural contexts.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY: Belief that the Christian Churches have a duty and a commitment to oppose social, economic, and political repression in societies where exploitation and oppression of humanity exist.

Liberation theology emerged in Latin America in the 1960s to challenge the Catholic Church's traditional role as defender of the status quo. Lay organizations and worker priests argued that the Church must identify itself with the interests of the poor. They became involved in grass-roots organization around development issues. A strong influence was the educationalist Paulo Freire (*The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1972). Despite the misgivings of the Catholic hierarchy, 1967 Pope Paul VI published his encyclical *Populorum Progressio* which condemned the differences between rich and poor nations. In 1968, the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM) meeting in Medellín, Colombia, espoused liberation theology (the fullest expression of which is Gustavo Gutierrez's *Theology of Liberation*, 1971).

[See Robert McAfee Brown (1993) *Liberation Theology: An Introductory Guide*, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press]

NEGRITUDE: An artistic and literary movement, developed by French-speaking Negro intellectuals, among them Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire, which critiqued Western society while it sought to cultivate awareness and appreciation of African values and modes of thought in reaction to racism and colonial domination. It has been described in terms of

black cultural nationalism and closely related to African nationalism (Irele, 1989: 263-4). The concept of Negritude involved the awareness, defence and development of African cultural values. Negritude epitomised counter-acculturation as it was a movement of reaction against western cultural and political domination.

NOSTALGIA: The word 'nostalgia' is said to have been coined by Johannes Hofer, a Swiss medical student in 1678, to describe an illness with symptoms such as insomnia, anorexia, palpitations, stupor, fever and especially persistent thinking of home (McCann, quoted in Relph, 1976: 41). Nostalgia was therefore more than mere homesickness as it was considered a serious condition that could be fatal if the patient was not returned home. It therefore demonstrates the importance of attachment to place once a relationship with such a place has developed.

'NORTH' & 'SOUTH' (referring to global north and south in geo-political usage):
'NORTH' Refers to the advanced industrialised economies in the northern hemisphere of the globe. SOUTH – Refers to the developing nations roughly concentrated in the southern hemisphere.

OSIBISA: 'Osibisa' is taken from the Osibisaba (mixed) rhythms of Ghanaian highlife music. 'Osibisa' was formed in London, England in 1969 by a multi-racial group of musicians. The nucleus of the band was from Ghana, while others came from Antigua, Grenada, Trinidad, and Nigeria. But they all had in common great musical rhythm, enthusiasm, and ability. Their music is described as a polyrhythmic blend of Jazz, Rhythm & Blues, African based drum music, Rock, Funk-Rock, Pop, Calypso and Latin Groove, creating quite an original sound. The band could be described as the first 'world music' act on a truly global scale. Their music has been very influential and Osibisa is still known as the Godfather of 'World Music'. The effect of their big hit single "Sunshine Day" (1975) was to change the disco scene for ever. Their song Woyaya recognized the on-going African struggle for freedom (www.Amazon.com) (www.Osibisa.co.uk)

OSMOSIS: A biological term referring to a process in which fluid (molecules) passes from an area of high concentration to an area of low concentration through a semi permeable membrane. The concept is utilised in this thesis to describe processes of cultural transmission.

APPENDIX 'D'

BLACK RESISTANCE AND CULTURAL MOVEMENTS & LEADERS:

Negro Spirituals: Resistance to domination was expressed, among others, indirectly through Negro Spirituals as an art form and an ancestor of *negritude* poetry. The Spirituals represented the Negro's reflection on his conditions and a mechanism of defence through lyrical symbols. This form of Negro religious expression adapted elements taken from white culture to the Negro's temperament and they were re-interpreted to apply to his situation as disguised instruments of resistance. Spirituals like '*Steal Away*' and '*Go Down Moses*' have been cited as expressions of resistance. In the case of the latter, they drew on the analogy of the deliverance of the Old Testament Israelites from slavery and expressed in the acceptable form of the Spirituals, their identification with the sentiment of exile and their aspirations to deliverance (Irele, 1989: 265). Negro spirituals formed the basis of musical forms such as blues and jazz (Johnson, 1998: 5).

Negritude was an artistic and literary movement, developed by French-speaking Negro intellectuals, among them Leopold Senghor and Aime Cesaire, which critiqued Western society while it sought to cultivate awareness and appreciation of African values and modes of thought in reaction to racism and colonial domination. It has been described in terms of black cultural nationalism and closely related to African nationalism (Irele, 1989: 263-4). The concept of Negritude involved the awareness, defence and development of African cultural values. Negritude epitomised counter-acculturation as it was a movement of reaction against western cultural and political domination.

Cesaire writes in reverential tones about the dignity and harmony of the black man and his world before the devastation inflicted on his world by the arrival of the white man at his shores:

What sort of men were these, then, who had been torn away from their families, their countries, their religions, with such savagery unparalleled in history?

Gentle men, polite considerate, unquestionably superior to those who tortured them – that collection of adventurers who slashed and violated and spat on Africa to make the stripping of her easier.

The men they took away knew how to build houses, govern empires, erect cities, cultivate fields, mine for metals, weave cotton, forge steel.

Their religion had its own beauty, based on mystical connections with the founder of the city. Their customs were pleasing, built on unity, kindness, respect for age.

No coercion, only mutual assistance, the joy of living, a free acceptance of discipline. Order – Earnestness - Poetry and Freedom...

(Aime Cesaire, quoted in Fanon, 1986: 130-131)

Though expressed in idealised tones, the fact of Africa's largely past civilisations predating European ascendancy is increasingly gaining recognition in academic circles, and the likes of Marcus Garvey struck similar tones in the struggle to restore black peoples lost pride.

Another poem also juxtaposes the white man's cruelty with the black man's virtue:

The white man killed my father

Because my father was proud

The white man raped my mother

Because my mother was beautiful

The white man wore out my brother in the hot sun of the roads

Because my brother was strong

Then the white man came to me His hands red with blood

Spat his contempt into my black face

Out of his tyrant's voice: 'Hey boy, a basin, a towel, water'

(David Diop, quoted in Fanon, 1986: 136)

In Cuba the Negro and his sub-culture had a preponderant influence on intellectual movements, according to Irele. The anti-slavery tradition centred Cuban literary interests on the Negro which also fed into the Cuban independence struggle and the anti-slavery ideological position of Cuban revolutionaries, Jose Marti in particular. Negro sub-culture was affirmed as integral to the Cuban national heritage, eventually giving rise to *negrismo*, the Afro-Cuban school (1920-1940). Africanisms in Cuba were worked into poetry, as was the use of the rhythms of Afro-Cuban music (Irele, 1989: 270).

Some other resistance literature struck a radical, assertive, strident and militant tone, such as the poem by R.E. Park:

I oppose all laws of state and country,
All creeds of church and social orders,
All conventionalities of society and system
Which cross the path of the light of Freedom
Or obscure the reign of the Right
(quoted in Irele, 1989: 273)

Pan-Africanism developed from the idea that people of African origin, however dispersed, share a racial identity – an ethno-political consciousness. It was a movement of ethnic and cultural solidarity for people of African descent throughout the world. Its ideological forefathers included Africanus Horton, a Sierra Leonean philosopher, J.E. Casely-Hayford, a newspaper publisher from the Gold Coast (Ghana), Edward Blyden and Alexander Crummell, the Liberian expatriates, Martin Delaney, and Henry Brown (Johnson, 1998: 95).

Denied the same rights as their fellow American citizens by the United States government and the US constitution which excluded citizens of African origin from the inalienable rights guaranteed to other groups, African Americans recognised the need to engage in transnational contacts, coalitions and interactions that are not controlled by foreign policy organs of governments (Johnson, 1998: ix-x). The case for this was cogently stated by DuBois:

The so-called Negro Group... while it is in no sense absolutely set off physically from its fellow Americans, has nevertheless a strong hereditary cultural unity born of slavery, common suffering, prolonged proscription, and curtailment of political and civil rights. Prolonged policies of segregation and discrimination have involuntarily welded the mass almost into a nation within a nation (W.E.B. DuBois, quoted in Johnson, 1998: x)

The racial dominance system also operated at the broader global level with the subjugation of Africans and peoples of African origin. Their common experience of oppression helped to forge a sense of solidarity despite belonging to discrete groups and being spread across continents. With its roots in Pan-Negro Nationalism in the United States, the term Pan-Africanism came into use in 1900 at the first Pan-African conference in London organised by Henry Sylvester Williams from Trinidad, attended by delegates from the West Indies and the United States. The conference adopted and presented a Memorial to the British government protesting the 'acts of injustice directed against Her Majesty's subjects in South Africa and other parts of her dominions' (Johnson, 1998: 100).

Against opposition from the United States and European governments, William Edward Burghardt DuBois convened five more Pan-African conferences between 1919 and 1945 during which delegates articulated their grievances and concerns, considered the challenges, and discussed ways of redressing them. Their demands included racial, political, and social equality, and demands around the aims and needs of African people, such as a voice in their own government, native rights to land and natural resources, modern education for all children, the development of Africa for Africans and not merely for profit of Europeans, reorganisation of commerce and industry for the welfare of the many, and civilised treatment of people despite their differences of race and colour. A sixth Congress was organised by

George Padmore in Manchester, and it was a benchmark in the international movement. It also brought into prominence emerging African leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta. A raft of resolutions was adopted on various African countries and against imperialism (Johnson, 1998: 28, 102-106)

Later hailed as the 'Father' of Pan-Africanism for his leading role in the movement and later elected its international president, DuBois contended that Africans and Black Americans shared both ethno-racial identity and the desire for freedom and sought to harness black solidarity in the struggle against inequality. He expressed the hope that the Pan-African congresses would eventually bring the Negroes of the world into a great international pressure group and that by sheer numbers black people could have great influence on the world.

It is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race, we must strive by race-organisation, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development' (Du Bois, quoted in Irele, 1989: 273)

Garveyism, the 'Back to Africa' movement founded by Marcus Garvey, revaluated African cultural heritage and raised racial consciousness among blacks. He hoped to lead the economically and politically dispossessed black masses to 'a promised land' - an African utopia, and though this utopia was never realised, the movement captured the imagination of millions and inspired a sense of dignity in the black personality (Johnson, 1998: 123). He established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) with its programme built around two linked grand objectives, racial pride and African nationalism; that the redemption of Africa depended on rebuilding and restoring African culture. Racial pride and solidarity pervaded the numerous activities of the Garvey movement, aimed to counter white prejudice against the black colour. Garvey exalted blackness, exhorting Negroes to be proud of their distinctive features, that African characteristics were not marks of shame to be camouflaged. A significant development was the first large-scale production of Negro dolls. Garvey also advocated the religious re-orientation of the Negro by ending the worship of the European image of God, an alien deity with Caucasian features. UNIA members replaced the white Madonna and Christ with a black Madonna and Christ (Johnson, 1998: 124-126). He urged the development of 'a government, a nation of our own, strong enough to lend protection to the members of our race scattered all over the world, and to compel the respect of the nations and races of the earth' (Johnson, 1998: 127).

Garvey's philosophy and strategy outlined in his publication, *The Negro World*, were adopted by the Nation of Islam and the Black Panther Party. These included the championing of Negro nationhood by the redemption of Africa; instilling ideals of manhood and womanhood in Negroes; making the Negro world race conscious; racial self-help; self determination and racial love and self-respect.

Garvey's movement is thought to have had an impact in South Africa, where branches of the UNIA were formed, and the themes of racial pride and solidarity were invoked in demands for civil and political rights. In South Africa the doctrines of the UNIA constituted a more radical challenge to white minority rule than they did to white supremacist and majority rule in the United States (Johnson, 1998: 141). Furthermore, it is thought that Garveyism may have influenced the ANC to change its name from the SANNC to the more Pan-African sounding African National Congress (ANC) and to add the UNIA motto 'One God One Aim One Destiny' to its letterhead. In addition, rumours and misperceptions about Garvey and his projects are said to have fuelled millennialist movements in rural areas in South Africa to further boosted support for the ICU and the ANC in the 1920's (Johnson, 1998: 142).

Rastafarianism as a form of resistance was both idealistic and ideological. It drew inspiration from the Ethiopian resistance to Italian colonial aspirations and aggression against

the then sole independent African country in 1896. Ethiopianism and the independence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had endeared many African preachers to its particular brand of Black Nationalism which opposed white colonial rule. It had its origins in South Africa in the 1870 when colour prejudice caused many Africans to establish their own churches rather than endure the segregation and humiliation of white churches (cited in Campbell, 1989: 328). Rastafarianism combined resistance to white racism and the culture of consumption, and expressed defiance through the medium of reggae music.

Post-slavery Jamaican society operated a colour-coded racial hierarchy with whites on top, the mixed race mulattoes in the middle, and blacks at the bottom. The system of gradations based on colour and texture of hair was also consolidated by the educational system which favoured the well-to-do (Campbell, 1989: 326-7). Response to white racism takes various forms, including imitation or rejection of whiteness. Imitation may take the form of skin lightening and hair straightening among women, the latter referred to as fryhead among Jamaicans. Rastafarianism marked the opposite; a rejection of white domination and adoption of an opposing stance around symbols of Black resistance to white culture and its materialism. There was therefore a link between Rastafarianism and Garveyism which raised racial consciousness among blacks, challenged prejudices against the Negro and extolled the beauty and worth of blackness.

The crowning of Ras Tafari, son of Ras Makonen of Harar in 1930 as Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of Judah, led those who believed to conclude that Haile Selassie was literally the Biblical King of Kings. The fusion of the Bible in which the works of Ja are praised in the Psalms, with the exploits of King Ja Ja, in addition to Garvey's reference to the crowning of a black king in Africa which seemed to have been fulfilled in the crowning of Ras Tafari, provided a framework for a new deification, replacing the white god and the white colonial British monarch with a black god and a black king believed to have been prophesied in Revelations 19: 11, 16 (Campbell, 1989: 331).

According to Campbell, in the established Christian churches of the 1930's God the Father was white, God the Son, Jesus was white, the angels were white, and the Holy Ghost was white. But Lucifer, the embodiment of evil, was black. In Rastafarianism there was a rejection of the link between Christianity and whiteness, a breaking with the white West Indian society and a linking of their cultural and spiritual roots with Ethiopia and Africa. Rasta men adopted the hairstyle of Masai warriors in East Africa, calling themselves locksmen or Nyamen in contra-distinction to the imitations of whiteness, such as the trend of black girls straightening their hair with hot combs (Campbell, 1989: 332). Dreadlocks are not unique to the Masai as they are common among many practitioners of indigenous religions in various parts of Africa as a religious sign.

The Rastafari were linked to the creation of cultural, especially musical, forms which challenged the dominance of white American music as it questioned other forms of domination. The early expression of the new music was known as Ska, a fusion of different black musical forms drawing from Mento (dance rhythm) of Jamaica and the Rhythm and Blues of Black America. Sound systems, which were big-yard dances, also developed as people's institutions in tandem with Rasta culture of resistance. Socio-religious and political songs, with a social criticism content were produced. Rasta challenged the colour-class gradations of the social hierarchy (Campbell, 1989: 339-340, 344). Reggae music continued to evolve in the spirit of resistance epitomised by Bob Marley and the Wailers, who extended the international reach and influence of Reggae and Rastafarianism, and the message of social justice. Their song lyrics also addressed themes of liberation such as: Get up stand up for your rights, Get up stand up, don't give up the fight; Blackman Redemption, can you stop it Oh No; and Buffalo soldier, taken from Africa brought to America, Fighting on arrival, fighting for survival (www.thirdfield.com/new/lyrics).

Rastafarianism with its dreadlock hair culture spread throughout the Caribbean also became fashionable in Africa and other parts of the world. The Rastafari Movement Association also aligned itself to liberation in Africa and also lending its support to the Anti-Apartheid movement (Campbell, 1989: 347).

Vodun (voodoo) as a form of resistance:

Conventional ideas of diaspora consciousness suggest spatial relations of diasporic nostalgia between place of origin and place of settlement (Safran, 1991). This structure is reversed in the case of the Whydah festival in the republic of Benin the original home of voodoo which reproduced an offshoot across the Atlantic in Haiti. The institution of the nation-statehood through colonialism, undercut the power of traditional authority. According to Peter Sutherland, the traditionalist faction of Benin society utilises the diaspora consciousness to challenge the neo-colonial values of the Benin government which undermine the traditional authority of the priests and kings. The performance of the festival calls for state recognition of vodun as the nation's majority religion in the general effort to restore indigenous culture and identity to prominence and to enhance the power and influence of the traditional leadership. To achieve this the festival projects vodun into an expanded transnational context by representing Benin as the home of diaspora brothers and the source of diaspora culture in the Americas and also promote "roots tourism" (Sutherland, 1999: 210).

Thus the Whydah festival represents a form of local resistance, in this case by the disempowered indigenous majority with its traditional elite, to the foreign modernity of a minority ruling elite, deploying the diasporic consciousness of its offsprings in the diaspora and thereby inverting the usual model of the home as the object of desire, by using the 'braches' to reinforce the 'roots' (Sutherland, 1999: 210)

Kwanzaa as a cultural celebration was an offshoot of the United States Civil Rights movement. It was the brain-child of Maulana Ron Karenga, a Black Nationalist leader who broke off from the Black Panther Party to form a cultural nationalist organization. Rejecting Carmichael's revolutionary politics and Marxist ideology, he proposed cultural and historical awareness as a condition for the liberation of black people in America. His ideological disagreement with Carmichael is said to reflect a split on a wider scale within the ranks of the international Pan-Africanist movement, between Marxist-Leninist and the Cultural Nationalist (Negritude) wings of the Pan-Africanist movement. He was influenced by the former Tanzanian president and Pan-African leader, Julius Nyerere, a proponent of an indigenous socialism based on African traditions.

It was designed at the height of the Black Power movement and has become a symbol of multiculturalism away from its Black Nationalist origins at a time when revolutionary nationalism was fading into a movement for cultural awareness among black intellectuals. It has also changed from a revolutionary symbol to an affirmation of middle-class values and American citizenship, a symbol of blackness framed within a model of multicultural middle-class harmony rather than a Black Nationalist ritual of resistance. Blackness has become a sign for ethnicity in its shift from a symbol of fatal racial exclusion to one of possible cultural inclusion (Hernandez-Reguant, 1999: 101).

As an invented tradition (see Hobsbawn, 1983), Kwanzaa, seeks to instil moral values and a group identity by claiming continuity with an ancestral past located in pre-slavery Africa. In this type of holiday, as Gans has noted, tradition is recreated through symbols while daily life continues as pragmatic responses to the demands of work, family, and hierarchical social structures in general (Gans, cited in Hernandez-Reguant, 1999: 105). In keeping with the trend towards seeking linguistic and cultural roots on the African continent which also included reclaiming African inspired fashions and aesthetics, Kwanzaa was set up as a holiday also to celebrate the seven moral principles theoretically developed by Karenga and based on different value systems in Africa, aimed at strengthening family, community and culture, using terminology borrowed from the Swahili language widely spoken in East Africa

(Hernandez-Reguant: 1999: 104). Although Karenga claimed that the seven principles reflected a communitarian view of personhood that is opposed to European individualism, they have come to support middle-class aspirations of upward mobility without questioning social stratification and inequalities (Hernandez-Reguant, 1999: 107). This was a more positive image and different black identity from that of an urban underclass dwelling in crime-ridden inner city areas, which was socially isolated and culturally deprived, and lacking civic responsibility and respect for traditional values (Hernandez-Reguant, 1999: 111)

The guiding motive behind the celebration of Kwanzaa is that people who belong to the ethnic group can recover and reconstruct their 'lost historical memory and cultural history', even if cultural continuity breaks down, according to its founder Karenga (cited in Hernandez-Reguant, 1999: 118). Kwanzaa aims at an annual renewal of historical memory through ritual that promotes group bonding and a shared commitment to values that are rooted in the (im)memorial past, as a distant moral state of nature situated in Africa, which is the ultimate source of a common identity to all peoples of African descent (Hernandez-Reguant, 1999: 118)

Kwanzaa represents much more than an invented tradition. It symbolises a synthesis of temporalities, and cultures, among others. It epitomises the new world aspirations of African-America; not the victimised segment of the American citizenry, albeit with a late admission to that citizenship, but a symbol and celebration of ethnicity that situates African Americans on the same level as other "hyphenated" Americans. It is an African-America that draws on cultural resources from Africa and combines them with socio-economic and political structures of European origin, individualism born of the Enlightenment era with African communalism expressed in a sense of a recreation of ethnic identity and communal celebration.

African-American political activism:

The early twentieth century witnessed the emergence of protest groups and political action organisations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) whose members included DuBois. It sought to influence United States policy towards the nations of Africa. It donated \$50,000 to the African National Congress (ANC) to help bring about majority rule in South Africa and helped conduct seminars in voter education (Johnson, 1998: 165)

The Black Muslim separatist group called **The Nation of Islam** emerged in the United States in the 1950's led by Elijah Mohammed self-styled as the messenger sent by Allah to redeem African Americans from Christianity and white supremacist domination. They endeavoured to establish sovereignty either in the United States as a nation within a nation, or by emigration to Africa. Their nationalist sentiments influenced and were refocused by **Malcolm X**

Malcolm X: Founded the Organisation of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) and Muslim Mosques Incorporated (Johnson 1998: 145-6). His argument that Blacks could not be racist because they lacked the power and inclination to dominate whites the way whites continue to dominate blacks, was echoed by other blacks who saw white racism as a hierarchical social order rather than a prejudiced attitude. Recognising the potential of a mobilised black solidarity, he embarked on a mission of transnational diplomacy, acting as African-America's roving ambassador, and advancing his Pan-Africanist credentials. While in Africa he established ties with representatives of various Developing and revolutionary nations, including China and Cuba, as well as African liberation movements, canvassing the support of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). He later developed a revolutionary militant nationalist alternative to the Civil Rights Movement, separate from his OAAU organisation (Johnson, 1998: 149-152).

Martin Luther King's protest movement was integrationist and emphasised non-violence. Other groups embraced the opposite ideas of separatism and the use of force in the face of continued white aggression and domination. These included the **Nation of Islam** and **Black Power** groups such as **The Black Panthers** were influenced by pro-violence ideology of the likes of the anti-colonialist Franz Fanon. But Black Power essentially was neither violent nor exclusionary of whites as it was more of self-determination for black people. Its expressed objective was collective bargaining strength for blacks in a pluralist society, a model that was adopted by other ethnic groups such as the Irish, Jews and Italians who exerted their political and economic power as voting blocks (Johnson, 1998: 167). They advocated the use of force to achieve Black liberation from white domination and oppression. They also realised the usefulness of an international dimension to the black struggle and leaders like Carmichael also campaigned on the international stage. The Black Panther Party spread beyond the North America and formed alliances and coalitions with revolutionary movements around the world, including moral support for the Vietnamese at the time of the Vietnam War (Johnson, 1998: 169)

Furthermore links were developed between the Pan-Africanists in the United States and liberation movements in the Caribbean and offered support to the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO). It was felt that advancing the struggle against imperialism abroad and capitalism at home would be an effective contribution to African liberation (Johnson, 1998: 171). The US Civil Rights movement was linked to the end of apartheid and the realisation of black majority rule in South Africa

More recently, African-American political activism has also influenced United States foreign policy toward Africa and the Caribbean, the most effective group in this regard being TransAfrica, the African-American lobby and think tank. The Trans Africa Forum since 1983 has conducted annual foreign policy conferences attended by members of the United States Congress and their staff, academics, students, and political activists. Participants discuss foreign policy issues and provide the public with perspectives that are not presented by the media. The TransAfrica seminars provide a medium for the analysis and sharing of opinions related to Africa and the Caribbean, and seminar proceedings are published in the *TransAfrica Forum* journal, also circulating opinion pieces from its *Africa Viewpoint* column to United States policy-makers. It also helped to pass the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986 (Johnson, 1998: 173-175).

The impact of blacks in mainstream politics is not very clear. In the United States Congress Black representatives formed the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) with the aim of coordinating individual efforts to represent African-Americans and exert more effective influence over legislative policy. It lent its support to the Carter administration which gained 90 per cent of the Black vote. The administration's appointment of Andrew Young with his Black Civil Rights movement background, as United States ambassador to the United Nations, marked the beginning of an unprecedented era of United States multilateral cooperation and dialogue with Developing countries and influence in Africa (Johnson, 1998: 188).

Overall it is believed that the **Congressional Black Caucus** (CBC) has been effective in influencing US foreign policy on behalf of the African-American community. It marks a transition from transnational politics to international politics; in effect transitioning from circumventing United States foreign policy to formulating US foreign policy through its activities in the US Congress (Johnson, 1998: 211).

More recently, the appointments of General Colin Powell and his successor Dr. Condoleezza Rice as US Secretary of State by the Republican administration of George W. Bush, highlights the rise of African American Blacks in mainstream US politics. Access to the powerful instruments of United States foreign policy affords African-Americans a means of engaging in international political action and influencing US foreign policy towards African and other black nations.

Early African Presence in Europe:

The presence of black Africans outside Africa has a long history predating the emergence of modern Europe. It is acknowledged that Africans have been in Europe from the earliest times to the present. There is said to be physical and cultural evidence of ancient African migrations to India, China, Japan, the Philippines, the Pacific islands, North and South America (see Hilliard, 1990: 93-94). The emergence and expansion of European civilisation occasioned a reconstruction of history from a Eurocentric perspective which edited out contributions to European civilisation from other parts of the world and from non-European peoples. Racist scholarship is blamed for this doctoring of history and retrospective airbrushing of the traces of Africans and their contributions from the early history of Europe. The myth of European isolation from the rest of the world is therefore shown to be historically misleading.

Commenting on this Hazel Carby writes:

... an Aryan, Greco-Roman, European history purged of semitic and continental African influence, was created in conjunction with imperial ideologies of manifest destiny. Upon the tabula rasa of the New World a European future was to be imprinted from a purified European past...' (Carby, 1999: 237)

More recent scholarship is refocusing attention on African antecedents of much of what is considered Greco-Roman (classical) civilization. Ivan Van Sertima contends that misleading labels have excluded Africans from histories and civilizations in which they played a significant part, and at times an unquestionably dominant role (Van Sertima, 1990: 11). Scholars such as Diop, Freud, James, and Massey, are cited for their contention that religion, astronomy, architecture, science, medicine, and many other areas of knowledge in Western civilisation bear the unmistakeable stamp of African parenthood (see Hilliard, 1990).

Paleontological evidence places prehistoric Africoid (Negroid) types of humans in Europe around 40,000 BC, having migrated to Europe at a time when Europe and Africa were a continuous land mass. These early blacks, labelled Grimaldis by modern scientists, and whose skeletal and sculptural remains have been discovered in the last century, are thought to have been 'the most significant human force in Europe during the Paleontological Age' (Clegg, 1990: 22-32). It is also claimed that successive waves of African explorers, colonists and warriors penetrated the Eur-Asian continent from the earliest periods of recorded history, before and down to the recent past. Some like the Twa (more familiarly known as the pygmy) have occupied Europe for thousands of years (See Van Sertima, 1990: 223)

It is again argued that there was a Negroid presence in the Mediterranean, on the islands of Crete in the Minoan period (3,150 BC), and there were more North African arrivals in the Mediterranean and mainland Greece in later centuries. Snowden (1970), writing about black people in classical times, shows how the word *Ethiopian* was used by the Greeks to refer to 'sunburnt' or black-faced people. Equivalent references to black people in the language of Greece and Rome included 'Afer' (African), 'Indus' (Indian), 'Maurus' (Moor), and 'Melas'. These black African people were in early intimate contact with Greece and Rome, and are mentioned in Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Snowden's meticulous work includes photographs of some of the primary data such as coins, pottery, carvings, and paintings.

The art historian, Brunson, drawing on a wide range of art and artefacts, also establishes both the physical and cultural presence of Africans in the Mediterranean and Aegean Isles and Crete. Major excavations in the area, affirm this assertion and conclude that that civilisation was African (Brunson, 1990: 36-62). Besides, archaeological and linguistic evidence have been adduced to show the influence of Africans and Semites on early Greece with the identification of many non-Indo European elements in the Greek language and in many divine, mythological and place names (see Bernal, 1990: 66-81).

Significant historical references to Africans entering Europe include: the Africans led by Batrikus (Latinised name) who entered Spain around 1,000 B.C.; thousands of African soldiers who entered Northern Italy and ruled for ten years from 217-207 B.C.; the large

contingents of African officials and soldiers brought into England in 200 A.D during the Roman occupation of England led by emperor Septimus Severus, himself a North African; apart from the 700 years of African-Moorish domination over the Iberian peninsular and Southern France from 711-1492 A.D. (see Van Sertima, 1990: 223)

Reviewing Joel Rogers' work on black people in antiquity, Hilliard draws attention to the Moors (or Maurus), the people of Mauritania who invaded Europe in large numbers from Africa, and left their traces in several European nations. European family crests showing black faces and coarse hair are frequently accompanied by African derivatives such as Mawr, Moore, Morris, Morrison, Maurice, Moorehead, Moretti, Muir, Mohr, Mareau, meaning a person from Mauretania. This label sometimes becomes a bit more indirect as in the German equivalents such as Schwartz (Black), Schwarzkopf (Blackhead), and Schwarzmann (Blackman), even though bearers of such names may bear few if any visible traces of African physiognomy (Hilliard, 1990: 92). Other surnames said to be indicative of the blacks include Dougal (from Dubgail, or 'black strangers) and all the varieties of Dubh (Black) such as Duff, Dow, Douglass, and MacDuff. Others such as Donn's, Carrs, and Dargs, and their equivalents Dunns, Browns, Greys and Blacks indicate a black ancestor (see Van Sertima, 1990: 259)

Moreover, it is also claimed that the original Moors, like the original Egyptians were black Africans. They made advances in mathematics, astronomy, medicine, architecture, and the sciences, including horticulture, botany and chemistry, developing gunpowder and shooting mechanisms known as firesticks. The Moors also generated a resurgence of activity in the arts and sciences and influenced embryonic nations like Spain and France, as well as older nations like China and India (see Scobie, 1990: 11-13).

Edward Scobie, citing other scholars indicates that the majority of people in Roman Africa were black. Scobie maintains that the African influence was far-reaching in those days and that several of the saints in Rome were African as were the earliest and most renowned authors. He cites the work of Robert Holtzclaw which explained that one of the churches of early Christianity was birthed in Africa and from Africa came Neo-Platonic thought and the first experiments in monasticism. Furthermore, that four of the early popes were black – Ss. Gelasius, Miltiades (or Melchiades), Victor I and Adrian. They occupied the papacy between the second and fifth centuries A.D. and made significant contributions to the growth of Christianity. Melchiades is said to have led Christianity to its final triumph against the Roman Empire. However later representations of them in paintings were Europeanised, as were paintings of African saints). Also, there are eighteen Black Madonnas and nearly twenty Negroes have been elevated to sainthood, including Benedict and Augustine (Roi Ottley quoted in Scobie, 1990: 196).

Scobie further draws attention to a comprehensive outline of the pervasive presence, role and impact of blacks in the Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British worlds for centuries, indicating their infiltration not only into Europe's religious hierarchies, but also their royal families (Scobie, 1990: 190-202). The presence of blacks in early Britain and pre-revolutionary Russia is also highlighted by scholars (see Van Sertima, 1990: 251-275).

Dispersal of Africans through slavery:

Between the seventh and nineteenth centuries, there was a massive involuntary movement of Africans into slavery in Arabia, India, Asia, Europe and America by foreign traders, raiders, and governments (Bonnet and Watson, 1989: xii). Prior to the trans Atlantic slave trade, black African slaves had been brought into Europe (Moorish Spain for instance) across Trans-Saharan trade routes. In the trade which developed between Christian Europe and Muslim Mediterranean, slaves were said to move back and forth from one side to the other. By the mid-fifteenth century there was a noticeable presence of blacks in Spain in such places as Barcelona, Seville, Valencia, and Italian ports such as Genoa, Florence and Venice, with even greater numbers in the Muslim societies to the south of the Mediterranean (Walvin, 2000: 1).

The Portuguese in turn transported Africans to such places Madeira, the Azores, Cape Verde islands, Sao Tome and Principe, Portugal, Brazil, and Africans were also found in England and Scotland in the sixteenth century (Walvin, 2000: 4-6). By the late eighteenth century, Africans and their descendants had moved or been dispersed to most corners of the Americas, some forming runaway independent communities in the mountains and forests, away from the control of white society (Walvin, 2000: 47). They were also in Europe and some were further transported to Australia in the first convict ships (Watson, 1989: 114).

APPENDIX ‘E’

SOME PARTICIPATING GHANAIAI CHURCHES IN GHANA’S 50th

Ghanaian churches that collaborated in the thanksgiving service on the 50th anniversary celebrations of Ghana’s independence in London in 2007 include Dunamis; Action Chapel; International, Dominion Centre; Elim Pentecostal; Ghanamma Presbyterian; Worldwide Miracle Outreach; Praise Chapel; Trinity Baptist; Methodist Chaplaincy; Anglican chaplaincy; Calvary Charismatic Baptist Church; On Eagle’s Wings Ministries; Evangelical Presbyterian Church; Ghana Seventh Day Adventist; The Ghanaian Chaplaincy.

Ghanaian churches in the UK would be difficult to list in full and outnumber the above listed.

Ghanaian Day Names:

Day	Male	Female
Monday:	Kwadjjo (Kojo)	Adjoa
Tuesday	Kwabena	Abena
Wednesday	Kwaku	Akua
Thursday	Yaw	Yaa
Friday	Kofi	Afua / Afia
Saturday	Kwame	Ama
Sunday	Kwesi	Akosua